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THEATRE

SEPTEMBER 81

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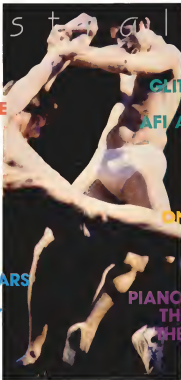
**OPERA
THEATRE
DANCE
FILM
MUSIC**

**THE
GLITTERING
PRIZES
AFI AWARDS**

**STEEL
ON TRUST**

**WILDSTARS
HITS
SYDNEY**

**PIANO COMP
THE PROS
THE CONS**





The Sydney Theatre Company

presents

Tennessee Williams'

cat on a hot tin roof

Starring

Wendy
Hughes

John
Hargreaves

Ron Haddrick

Directed by

Richard Wherrett

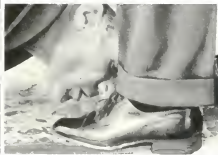
Designed by

Ian Robinson

September 22 to October 31

Drama Theatre

Sydney Opera House



THEATRE

a u s t r a l i a

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WILDSTARS



Australian Dance Theatre

cloud nine

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Director

Aubrey Mellor

Designer

Vicki Feitscher

CATHY DOWNES

BARRY OTTO

MICHELE FANDON

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COMMENT

On Awards. . .

A few weeks ago, in the imposing Great Hall of the National Gallery of Victoria, Lord Ted Willis (remember *Ones of Dark Gentry*) presented the AWAIE Awards. This was the fourteenth occasion of an annual honoring by the Writers' Guild of the work of its members for "outstanding achievement" in a whole range of fields: radio, television, stage and film.

In a few weeks time the AFI Awards will be presented on an even more glittering occasion at the Regent Theatre in Sydney. The fact that this is the 24th annual presentation should give pause to those who think of the Australian film industry as an idly rich though blooming infancy.

For film and television there are the Pergents, the Society Awards and, for cinematographers alone, the Australian Cinematography Society Awards. For television specifically there are the TV Week organized Logie Awards.

But when we turn to the live performing arts there is almost nothing. Up to three or four years ago the National Critics' Circle was awarding goings in each state for 600 performing arts person, but is now reduced (after the withdrawal of Australia Council funds) to a Sydney Critics' Circle digging into its own pockets for a single New South Wales theatre award. In 1977 the idea of linking *Theatre Australia* and the Playwrights' Conference in the mounting of the National Theatre Awards was initiated. They ran for two years, but died out when "under review" for 1978. It is ironic to look back to Len Radcliffe's comment about them in the Melbourne Age, that they represented an over-proliferation of awards.

There are problems of fairness and scrupulousness with awards for theatre far more than in other fields. Scripts, films, TV programmes and discs can be made available for national consumption and are reasonably open to judgment by panels divorced from the original production broadcasts screenings.

Who should judge? Ray Lawler rejected his Critics' Circle Drama Award for Victoria on the grounds

that "if you accept such awards one is recognizing the right of critics to make a definite opinion. If one accepts that right when they're in your favour then one must accept it when they go against you." As with the AFI Awards and AWAIEs, it seems best for the profession to judge themselves. But again, do enough practitioners in each state see a sufficient number of shows to be in a position to vote on a fair basis?

The AFI and AWAIEs select only from those who actually enter their films and scripts. Again, the Lawler objection is relevant here — though John Sarner accepted an award for the MTC as a whole, with the proviso that had it been for him personally he would have done as Lawler. The AWAIEs look slightly odd for not having a Louis Nowra script anywhere, nor a mention of Stephen Sewell's *Travellers*; the simple fact is, though, that neither entered. Still, the possibility of a Sydney Theatre Award, for which, for argument's sake, the MTCed refused to be considered, would be unthinkable.

Then why not maintain the present no-national-theatre-award situation? Simply because — given the awards could gain respect within the profession besides obviously being gilded in terms of press attention, in Elizabeth Riddell's words, "they serve a purpose in making official and public the industry's standards of excellence." And, beyond that, "in a way, they define the industry's opinion of itself."

Perhaps CAPPA, the association of performing arts companies should, with Equity partners, look to mounting awards again. The Playwrights' Conference Theatre Forum doing dinner would be an ideal venue. No doubt, as with the AFI Awards — given that the media love gala occasions well as well with well known faces — a TV network could be enticed to broadcast, and perhaps even sponsor, the event.

The theatre industry should not be alone in failing to honour the "outstanding achievement" of its workers.

Robert Page, Editor

THEATRE info



Steve Spears

SPEARS FOR ROCKY

It looks like the many talents of Steve J Spears will be manifesting themselves again over the next few months.

Following his role in the title of *Celluloid Heroes*, he will be playing the part of Fiddy, the rock star, in the revival of *The Radio Mirror Show*, which opens next month. Londoners, Daniel Abner, will star as Frank 'n' Porter under the direction of David Togian.

Spears has also just finished the first draft of a film script called *Those Dear Departed*—a musical black comedy about a wife killing her singing star husband who then returns to haunt her. Spears and producer Hilary Linstead plan to start a film company that will make *Those Dear Departed*, and Brian Thomson is interested in making it his directorial debut.

A movie version of *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* is also mooted, but as Steve Spears says, "It all takes so long".

He has also just written an earlier stage play of his called *When They Send Me Three and Fourpence*—about an alcoholic dancing instructor in St Kilda. In its earlier form a lot of theatre companies were apparently enthusiastic, but felt a "doin' quite make it", so he's hoping that M12 will do just that.



Gordon Graham

AWGIE FOR DEMOLITION JOB

Gordon Graham was the winner of the 1981 AWGIE Award for Best Play, with his work *Demolition Job*. The play had a very successful run at the MTC at the start of the year, and his previous productions include *Jesus and His Apostles*, which were on at London's Royal Court, and *Freaks*, produced at Playbox in 1975. He is currently adapting Gabriel Loeb's novel, *Fortress*, for the screen for R and R Films, to be directed by Bruce Beresford.

The AWGIES were presented to writers from throughout Australia at the National Gallery of Victoria on August 14, during the Australian Writers' Guild first national conference, in Melbourne. They are the annual awards in which writers honour writers, for their achievements in writing for stage, radio, film and TV.

The Best Original Film Script was David Williamson's *Gallipoli* and Bob George took out Best Documentary for his script, *The First Men: Days*. WA writer, Ken Kelm received the Award for Best Film Adaptation for *Mongolman*, which he adapted from the novel by Keith Roberts.

More than 350 writers and observers from other professional associations, such as Actors' Equity, Theatrical Employees Association and the Musicians Union attended the AWG Melbourne Conference.

SCHOOLS DAY SUCCESS

Since it began three years ago, the Melbourne Theatre Company's Schools-day programme has grown enormously, to the extent that this year it will have played to more than 25 000 secondary students from throughout Victoria. The MTC programme is being used as a model for educational theatre schemes in other states, and seems to have had enormous success in fostering interest and involvement among young people in theatre, judging by the response from their teachers.

The full-day programme includes an illustrated discussion/demonstration devoted to focus students' interest and attention on the play in question, including material on rehearsal processes, approaches to the text, design, lighting, stage mechanics, costumes and so on. After a full performance of the play, they then have a talk back session with all those involved in the production.

Half-day programmes are specially prepared by MTC actors and directors for a schools audience—some highly specific and others of broader general interest, like an acting workshop or workshop on RSC poetry.

GOING UP

Michael Scherry, an actor tipped for the top at the State Theatre Company of SA when Colin George was in charge, is fulfilling his original promise in London. He went straight to the STC, SA after graduating from NIDA in 1978, and worked his way up through roles in such productions as *School For Scandal*, *The Cenci*, *Orlando*, *Amie Get Four Gals and Caroline*, to finally playing the big one, *Hamlet*, to great acclaim.

Scherry decided to expand his horizons by going to London in 1979 and through luck and contacts was taken on by the RSC. For the last two years he has played big parts and spear-headed at Stratford, but he managed to "blow my way to the top" and recently made his London debut as Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice*. His other role in the London, Aldwych season is *Pericles in Rome*, but still, he feels his career is now on the way. "You just hope someone sees you playing at the Aldwych and offers something better," he said.



Michael Bellamy



Peter Barclay

THE RIGHT COMPANY FOR TOWNSVILLE

Peter Barclay and Terry O'Connell, the joint Artistic Directors of the new Northern Queensland Theatre Company, to be based in Townsville, are currently scouring the country for some 10 actors to work in their first season. Adding locally first, they will then go on to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide as their quest for the right company. Between them, the two Directors will also share the work of one actor.

The first programmes will run from December to June, and involves touring four shows round the Townsville, Rockhampton, Mackay and Cairns circuit, working as the Civic Theatre. Before then actually starts, Barclay and O'Connell have the task of co-ordinating the whole company, including such matters as rehearsal space, equipment and policy.

They are in the best position of looking that funding for the company is quite adequate, with last year's aborted start having been granted \$75,000 from each of the state and federal funding bodies, plus the whole project having been underwritten to the tune of \$90,000 by the four city councils jointly. They are confidently applying for an inflation increased budget this year.

In the mean time, the Directors would like to hear from locals what sort of the size they would like, and expect, from their new company.



NO ROOM FOR DREAMERS

This month's "Theatre Australia New Writing" playcript — free only to subscribers, please note — is George Hutchinson's *No Room For Dreamers*.

Unfortunately, a major credit has been left out of the text, that of Lax Marinos as director of the successful Ensemble production that toured Australia and Britain, including the Edinburgh Festival.

Hope you enjoy the script. If you'd like to get four new Australian plays free each year and don't currently subscribe to TA, fill in and send off the form in this issue as soon as possible. A subscription to the magazine makes a nice Christmas present, too!

I AM WORK?

The Hunter Valley Theatre Company are having trouble finding a suitable inspiring tale for their new production. The new script by John O'Donoghue, about Benjamin Lewis and BHP, is tentatively titled "I Am Work", but the company don't feel this is the sort of name that will bring in audiences looking for a relaxing night out.

The play is far from a biographical documentary, but is packed with incident, characters and song — after the styles of Hewitt, *Legend of King O'Malley* and *No Room For Dreamers*.

The play will be part of Newcastle's annual Maitland Festival and as the company has used up its subsidy for this year, will be supported by the Festival, the City Council and local media and business sponsors. In spite of its enormous interests in Newcastle, and the play being about its founder, BHP have refused to support the production.

Playwriting Awards 1981-82



- A. Best New Play Prize \$1000
B. Best New Play for Youth Audiences Prize \$1000

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. Entries must not be submitted to South Australia.
2. Four copies of each entry must be submitted.
3. Entries must be typed (double-spaced) on one side of each page.
4. Play must not have been produced in professional production.
5. The competitors must state the names of the actors who play in every scene.
6. The closing date for entries is November 28, 1981.
7. Prizes must be forfeited if:

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LETTERS NO PUPPET CO-PRODUCTIONS

In the August issue of *TA* certain inaccuracies about the Marston Theatre were reported.

1. Our season at the Playbox (Melbourne) in October Roger Polver's *General MacArthur in Australia* is definitely not a co-production — the MTA is hiring the place and taking all the risk.

2. *Marstonians*, Geoff Krize's almost one-man show will happen at the Stables (Sydney) in September — again not a co-production — the designer is Farnon d'Avoy.

Thanks,
Philip Krize,
Administrator,
Marston Theatre of Australia.

A MILDLY POLITICAL STATEMENT

I was extremely cross to see that in each of my articles in the July issue of *Theatre Australia* you have made just one cut (and without checking with me first). Of course I do not object to being cut for reasons of space, but to omit the one paragraph in each week frames my argument politically as to act as a divider rather than an editor.

It is important for the readers of the review of *Golden Faller* to know why suitability might be a good theme for children, so I'm quoting the last you cut to explain that.

It's a good theme for children, because

it provides great scope for imagination and fantasy and at a deeper level, contains a positive political aspiration for them — you do not have to accept things as they are. This is not to suggest that the play is didactically earnest — it isn't. The writing is abundant, lyrical and witty, weaving a plot about a bunch of exotics who fight to save their home from a marauding landlord.

Perhaps you could explain why you chose to cut these, rather than any other, lines?

Similarly, in the review of *COME OUT* #1, I wonder why the section about the two environmental people (Penny Chapman and Jim Glan) "who have pursued consistently the philosophy that shows should largely come out of the experience of young people themselves, rather than being imposed on young audiences by those who think they know better, etc" was struck out?

Is it that *Theatre Australia* is afraid of any mildly political statement and ought to join the Packer and Fairfax crowds who merely want to stir up mischief without having to think?

Yours faithfully,
Chris Westwood

The cuts made in Chris Westwood's articles in the July issue were made for no other reasons than the exigency of space. In both cases the last sentence cut was in fact a line which was also on the basis that the points made therein were implicit in the bulk of the writing. — Ed

Oakley stimulation, Oakley agitation, Oakley arousal, Oakley excitation,
Oakley electricity, Oakley provocation, Oakley sensation

Marsupials and Politics Two Comedies by Barry Oakley

Marsupials is about native Australians — Frank, who's good at publishing and drinking, and his wife Sue, who is attracted to journalism in London. When Tom, an old friend, comes from England to stay with them, explosive forces are let loose.

The result, in the words of the drama critic of the Melbourne Herald, is "a play of entertaining as balance, that connects pungently with its audience as it pulls Australian attitudes apart." With dialogue "that crackles and throws off sparks" (*The Australian*).

With *Politics*, Oakley moves from biting comedy to the high road of farce. In a series of freewheeling scenes that build up to a wild climax, Oakley's politicians fight, flatter and flit in their desperate attempts to capture the biggest desk in the land.

"If you haven't got a theatre, a reading lamp will do." That's what *Theatre Australia's* John McCallum said of Oakley's last collection. It's the same with *Marsupials* and *Politics*!

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SHOW BUZZ

by Norman Krassell

Three smash-hit musicals running simultaneously? *Evita*, *Chicago*, *The Pussycat Theatre*. Even in the "good old days" Sydney surely had it so good! And apart from *Pauli LaForte*, a real live Broadway star who brought a new dimension to *Evita*, all with 100 per cent Australian casts. Moreover, the latter two can be proudly labelled "Made in Australia", for though *Chicago* hails from the US, our production has home-grown direction, design and choreography.

Success of *Richard Wherrett's Chicago* caused some backbiting among local managements. One top entrepreneur told me gloomily: "We saw a in New York and we wouldn't have put a penny in it!"

And that's not the end of it. *Chicago* moves to Melbourne's Comedy Theatre for a 10-week season from Sept 5 and at time of writing, an Adelaide run is being suggested. Then it comes back to Sydney for a seven week return at the Regal. The only problem is to keep the company ready for that length of time. Fingers crossed, please.

A reminder that the *Slimed*'s magnificent *Forever Young* is now in Adelaide and comes to Melbourne Sept 16, Geelong Oct 6.

Also, that other driveline, month-breaking musical, *They're Playing Our Song*, with Jackie Weaver and John Waters, opens a return season in Melbourne next month and in Sydney — this time at Her Majesty's — next February.

Meanwhile at the Regal, the Australian Dance Company launch in on Sept 4, followed by Winton. Winton's new production of *The Rock's Women Show* on Oct 5.

Director John Krummel assembled a great cast for his revival of *Richard Beynon's The Shining Hour* at Sydney's Marlan St Theatre from Sept 4. Tom Farley plays the role he created in May Bellmether's original 1967 production at the Elizabethan Theatre. He's supported by Alan Wilson (in the part Beynon himself played), Lois Ramsey, Phillip Baker, Kit Taylor, Joanne Lockwood, Syd Haylen and Rob Steeds. Design is by NIDA graduate Richard Judding, who designed John Clarke's graduate production of *Twelfth Night*.

As tipped here last month, the Elizabethan Trust has let Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* go to the Melbourne Theatre Company, but will still consider touring it if this production is successful. Directed by John Sumner and designed by Anne Frazer, it opens the MTC's Season 28 Part 2 at the Athenaeum Oct 14. Key roles of Mozart and Salieri will be played by Bruce Myles and Frederick Panfili.



Chicago — top entertainment this city



Julia Weaver — starring in the month-breaking *Song*



Frank Thring — the life comes and goes at MTC



Pat Ewson in *Love* — comes to town next month

To follow at the Athenaeum are Ben Travers' *A Carbine in The Hand*, directed by Simon Chelms, from Dec 1 and Gotthold Lessing's *Misere Von Bernhardt* adapted and directed by Ray Lawler, from Feb 10.

The Russell St Theatre season opens Sept 30 with Australian writer Sandy McIntosh's *The Town*, directed by Ray Lawler, followed on Nov 25 by *Franklin Thring* — a one-man show by the distinguished actor in which he looks at his life, times and talent. Then on Feb 10 comes the Australian premiere of *Edna O'Brien's Purgatory*, based on the lives and writings of

Virginia and Leonard Woolf.

And due to the demand for seats for *Sophocles' Antigone*, now at Athenaeum 1 until Oct 10, the MTC announces a return season from Nov 9 to Dec 5.

Another interesting return is the Athenaeum comedy *Same Time Next Year*, opening at Melbourne's Playhouse Sept 22 with Peter (Cape Shop) Adams and his wife, Kirsty Child.

As *Marcel Marceau* ended his opening show at Sydney's Regent Theatre on a rather run down cash note with a series of flowers which they, aided by complimentary front-rowers, began to haul one by one on stage. I suspect this happened at all performances in all times. I find this even sillier and more unnecessary than the flowers and champagne boringly brought on at Australian Balli openings. I mean, how spontaneous can you get? Surely the applause and shouts for "Marc" were genuine and genuine is enough even for a great artist like Marceau.

Simultaneously with the Writers Guild of America after a 13 weeks strike, winning major pay and conditions gains, the Australian Writers Guild has reached agreement with most Australian theatre groups on a standard minimum-honouring agreement for non-commercial stage plays. Writers are advised to obtain a copy of the agreement before signing any contract with a theatre company.

Word from Sydney's *Shopfront Theatre For Young People* that its director, Errol Bray, will be going to New York later this year for an off-Broadway production of his controversial play, *The Chair*.

Sydney's *Nimrod* has scheduled 14 more free performances for unemployed, pensioners and students of the nine productions listed from now till the end of the year.

If you think theatre prices are too high, spare a thought for New Yorkers being asked a record \$100 for the two-part eight and a half hour straight play adaptation of *Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby*, which opens Oct 3. Show cost more than \$1 million to import — and must earn \$300,000 a week to break even. Broadway's current top price is \$15, charged by several musicals.

New Zealand actress Pat Ewson, who works as much in Australia as the dawn at home — she was an award winner in the ABC's *Pig In A Poke*, played a moving death scene in Michael Pate's moving *Tim* and died again in the TV block buster *A Town Like Alice* — is just completing a major role in *Gillian Armstrong's* new musical movie *Evita* before going into *Ram Mutt's The Last Days At Woodlawn* at the *Nimrod* — her first stage role here since *David Stoney's Move* at the Old Tote in 1973, although *Patrick White* had wanted her for *A Clown*. *Soul* when the Tote was going to stage it at the Seymour Centre. Pat has died out for years on her famous quote from an Australian critic: "She has a face like a block of home units — with every unit occupied."

spotlight

MTC: Pressure to Profit

by Kate Legge

"The tightening of Government funding means that the Melbourne Theatre Company is forced to be less innovative... At the same time the repertoire must be aimed unashamedly at a much wider audience. In short the company is being forced to become more commercially minded in every way."

Is this a printing mistake? Is it a joke? No. It is the director of the company, Mr John Sumner, coming down to earth.

This bad news was the main thrust of the Melbourne Theatre Company's slick "Annual Report 1980", which was published at the end of July. Although management has not yet had to chop up seats for firewood, the company is having to cut back and conserve.

Staff may be retrenched, training programmes cancelled and the work-shopping of new Australian plays curtailed. At present, this bleak economic outlook is confined to a page in a brochure, but how long before it is being broadcast on stage?

In the blurb advertising the MTC's new season to start in October, Mr Sumner sums up the selection of works with these words: "It seems to me that a mood of optimism is called for in today's writing for the theatre, and while the contents of our chosen plays range far and wide, I believe that the playwrights concerned have taken a positive approach to their particular themes."

It is difficult to know whether this "put on a happy face" approach stems from Mr Sumner's reaction to the immediate burden of financial pressure, or the problems of the world on a larger scale. When I asked him why "optimism" is called for, he answered, "Why not?"

"There is no real excuse for being pessimistic. This country has a great future." He went on to stress that in the

coming season, the company must appeal to an end of year audience looking for a night of family entertainment.

So the season offers plenty of humour: *A Cuckoo In The Nest*, a farce by Ben Travers, *Frankly Drugg*, an evening with the man himself, and *Minnie Van Barnhelm*, a comedy by Gotthold Lessing. It also includes at least one guaranteed box office success, *Amadeus*, a "main award winning play" by Peter Shaffer, "currently a smash success in London and on Broadway". Finally, two new Australian plays have been included in the programme: *The Truce* by Sandy McCaughan, and *Narrow Fear* by David Knight.

So much for the unashamedly commercial theatre promised in the Annual Report. While some fringe theatre groups would argue that the MTC has always been commercial, Mr Sumner does not take such criticism seriously. "The Peam Factory's policy was innovation at all costs. Now they have gone out of business. That is the danger."

He prefaces the word "traditional" to describe a theatre tempered with caution. The MTC's production of Ibsen's *The Doll's House* last year is a classic example. Although it ran for only six weeks, the figures for total paid attendance were the highest on record for 1980.

"It was a highly successful, completely traditional production, but we are not a commercial company in the sense of making a profit. That's all."

Presumably audiences can expect more traditional theatre in the future. In the Annual Report, Mr Sumner qualifies this prediction. Without an increase in State Government subsidy, the company will be "working for profit rather than the development of artists, staff, playwrights and the quality aspects of theatre."

The amount of money needed to fund productions classed as financial risks is no longer forthcoming. Falling attendances last year, coupled with increasing costs, means the company must play safe, if it is to balance its books.

Summer refers to the company's recent production of Brecht's *The Good Person of Setzuan*, as an example of what the Report describes as "plays that are beyond the interest and scope of commercial management." "The general public interest in this work was virtually non-existent," he said.

The only alternative to commercial theatre and government subsidy is private and/or corporate sponsorship. So far the MTC's bid to attract revenue from this source has proved unsuccessful. "National companies have more pull here, and the opera and ballet are more likely to attract the sort of sponsorship than drama, which appeals to people in an individual way, they have to think about it more deeply."

The quest for corporate sponsorship is linked to the success of the Victorian Arts Centre as the MTC's future home. Although the move has been put back to 1992, Mr Summer said it

could well be a couple of years later still.

"Of course we are worried about it being completed. We are in the invidious position of advocating its construction since 1985. In that time we have lost a lot of ground."

In the Report he poses the dilemma more forcefully: "Can the Government afford to own a building which it is not prepared to service with properly supported companies? Can it afford to let these companies stagnate and deteriorate now in the hope that suddenly 'it will be all right on the opening night'? An old adage that has resulted in theatrical chaos in the past may well do so again."

If the company's appeal for private or corporate sponsorship fails, the policy he outlines will soon become a reality. Mr Summer says he feels very depressed at the prospect of having to scrap the quality and style of Melbourne Theatre Company productions. "It is hard to accept when a

company of our size suddenly finds itself going backwards."

When the MTC was established thirteen years ago, it set out "to provide for the production, representation and performance of theatrical entertainments which are not generally offered to the public by commercial management."

Whatever misgivings members of the theatre-going public may have about just what effect "going commercial" will have on the MTC's repertoire, the new director makes a mockery of the company's original objectives.

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WENDY HUGHES —

The cat on a hot tin roof

by Cathy Peake

Cat On A Hot Tin Roof finds its place in Tennessee Williams' oeuvre somewhere between *Camino Real* (1951) and *Bats Doll* (1957).

First produced at the Morosco Theatre in New York in 1955 by the Playwrights Company, it was directed by Elia Kazan with Barbara Bel Geddes in the role of Maggie.

Since then it has found audiences all over the world, has been made into a film starring Elizabeth Taylor, and on September 22 it will open at the Sydney Opera House under the direction of Richard Wherrett, with Wendy Hughes taking the leading role.

Returning to the stage for the first time in eight years, Wendy Hughes says she is excited by the prospect and somewhat nervous.

"I knew the play reasonably well before I was cast. The role of Margaret is fascinating and I'm really looking forward to it," she said by phone from Melbourne. She also said that she was unable to say much more than that at this stage.

With rehearsals not due to start until the 17 August she is largely preoccupied with her current role in the film *Close to the Heart*.

There she plays a spinster of thirty or so who meets a man (Norman Kaye) through a commercial introduction service and a liaison develops.

Wendy Hughes' last appearance on stage was for the MTC in 1977 when she played in a Feydeau farce.

It would be hard to imagine a role more different from that of Margaret than her current film role. Richard Wherrett describes Margaret as a figure of extraordinary will, enterprise and life-force — the real counterpoint to the fact that Big Daddy (her father-in-law and an exceptionally

wealthy Southern Plantation owner) is dying of cancer.

For the Sydney Theatre Company production, John Hargreaves is to play Brick (Margaret's husband) and the other main roles are to be taken by Monica Maughan, Joan Sydney, Ron Haddrick and John Paterson.

Wherrett first worked with Hughes and Hargreaves when they were students at NIDA in 1970. "As long ago as that I thought they would be right for the character parts of Margaret and Brick."

"I think Wendy is especially right for the role of Margaret. It's very important that the actress in this role is able to project an exciting, sexy, devious and highly manipulative person. After all, Margaret is a 'cat on a

hot tin roof" because she is sexually frustrated."

Tennessee Williams wrote a second version of *Act Three* for the play in 1966 and it is that one which Wherrett will use. The ending remains highly ambiguous but Wherrett will be pushing the line that something is going to happen — though what, he says, is a matter of interpretation.

He sees *Cat* as very much an actor's play — as one which provides enormous scope for theatrical effects. "Tennessee Williams is popular again now, because of his poetry and his theatricality."

"Unlike *Cyrano de Bergerac*," he said, "once you have got the job of casting done for this play, the work is largely up to them."



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spotlight

KNOWING WHAT TO THROW AWAY

Theatre companies in Sydney and Melbourne have often invited overseas directors to do major productions — most notably Liviu Ciulei for an award-winning *Lower Depths* in Sydney, and Frank Hauser and Michael Blakemore in Melbourne. In a guest *TA* Comment in July, Richard Wherrett defended his choice of William Gaskill against a xenophobic storm of protest for the STC's *Hamlet* at the Opera House Drama Theatre.

This month noted UK Director RICHARD COTTRELL has produced *The Revenger's Tragedy* for the State Theatre Company of SA and spoke to MICHAEL MORLEY about his approach.

The choice of the play was left completely up to you?

No, Paul Hes asked, would I like to do a Jacobean tragedy? We talked about a number of Jacobean tragedies but the notion that Jacobean tragedy was my exclusive fonic is something of a strange invention of the publicity department. Though I've directed a number of Shakespeare plays I've only in fact directed one Jacobean tragedy before. I think maybe to be absolutely truthful, Paul and "What would you like to do?" Then one thinks "I want to do that play" and "Oh, but what about *sex* play?" and I thought I needed a more specific brief, so we went into the Jacobean area. Webster had been done here; Rodney Fisher did a *Duchess of Malfi* not long ago, and there was a touring production of *The White Devil* here.

*Why *The Revenger's Tragedy*?*

Well, after the others, there didn't seem any point in not doing the best, even though it's perhaps not the easiest.

When you said you've only done one of them, which was the other one that you've done?



Richard Cottrell. Photo: David Whelan.
The Duchess of Malfi which I did in '77 at the Bristol Old Vic.

I've done Shakespeare throughout my directing career. Shakespeare for the Cambridge Theatre Company (the company I started in 1970) and of course Shakespeare for the Bristol Old Vic.

One of the things that is sometimes said about Australian actors is that they tend to be very far about speaking and that the delivery of some tends to pose them greater problems.

Well I haven't seen very much classical work in Australia! I saw a small company in Sydney last week called Actors Unlimited doing *Othello* and I saw *Hamlet* at the Opera House and that doesn't strike me as being the case at all.

*Do you think that in the case of *The Revenger's Tragedy* for example, the problem are more acute there? The language is more fragmented and tends to go off at tangents perhaps more than in Shakespeare?*

I don't think the verse in *Revenger's Tragedy* is particularly difficult. Some of Shakespeare — especially his later plays like *The Winter's Tale* — is appallingly difficult because it's so dense and compact. That would pose just as many problems.

Can we talk about your production?

I don't start rehearsals till August 17, so I really don't have all the answers — quite apart from the fact that one looks at four weeks of rehearsals to find some of the answers. Putting on a play isn't one person imposing an inflexible will on a

number of other people, theatre is a cooperative activity.

So questions about the approach — "tragic comedy" or "black farce" — will presumably depend upon the sort of people you are casting and on the rehearsal period.

No, I don't think so. I think it quite plainly is a tragical satire or satirical tragedy. But it's clearly not a tragedy in the sense that *King Lear* is a tragedy. There is a problem with the ending but at least in *Revenger's Tragedy* you get all the daughters over rather quickly. Look at *Women Beware Women*, where somebody dies by having molten gold poured on them, somebody else dies by poisoned perfume being sprayed into the air, somebody else dies by being shot through with arrows by pageboys disguised as eunuchs, somebody else dies by having extremely unpleasant machines coming up through the floor of the stage and going straight through them.

On balance, *Revenger's* is slightly easier.

Have you spent much time reading background material on the play?

I like to do a lot of reading round a play, but I don't usually find academic criticism very helpful, though I do feel a compulsion to read it.

Sometimes a sentence just stands out, and you think "Oh yes that's really true", or "That's a view which I see as possible to express in theatrical terms." I don't always find them that useful, because they say things that you can't express in theatrical terms.

There are, of course, a number of directors who tend to throw their hands up at "academic criticism" and don't look at anything concerned with background material.

We all have our own ways of working and I couldn't criticise anyone for not doing research. That may be his or her way of working, but this is the way I need to work. Because otherwise, when I start rehearsal, I feel insecure and it's not good to feel insecure, and guilty because you haven't done your homework.

You've obviously got a very innovative and thorough approach to the background research?

I think you've got to know what you are throwing away, and why, before you throw it away.



STARSTUD — a new musical

by Jane Seaborn

Considering the recent influx of space adventure movies (*Star Wars*, *Flash Gordon*, ad infinitum) one would expect the public to have reached saturation point.

Not so, says Brisbane's TN Company whose next production, *Starstud* is billed as a "rock and roll, fast food, space fantasy".

Starstud is the result of many months' work by two talented young actors who will see their show performed by T.N. this month.

Markin Cork and John Rush have created what they call "an ex-transparens" — a rock musical about two space heroes, *Starstud* and *Jonon*, who are out to save the Universe, this time from the machinations of the wicked Shal Bataru and his plot to take over the world by dragging the hamburgers in his ever-growing fast food chain.

Cork, 25, originally got the idea for *Starstud* after seeing *The Rocky Horror Show* and teamed up with Rush, 21, who is a Kelvin Grove Performing Arts graduate.

"The combination of fast food and space adventure is certainly original,

and the show is in keeping with T.N.'s policy of presenting locally written productions. This year, the Company has chosen plays from three areas:

our European heritage (*Hawkins and Mother Courage and Her Children*), Australian plays (*The Choir*) and locally written productions (*Skin 'n' Frenz*, *Starstud* and *The Doodle*).

Starstud is being directed by Sean Mee (no newcomer to large scale musicals) who has chosen 15 all-local cast members including Stephen Preston who was highly acclaimed for his performance in *Orangutan* at La Boite Theatre and Duncan Wain whose talent as a performer (with both the Queensland Theatre Company and the TN Company) has increased notably in recent years.

The show's music will be provided by a five-man band (including Rush on keyboards) which is actually on stage in the set. Rush says *Starstud* will incorporate all the electricity and immediacy of a live rock concert interpreted in a theatrical medium, an ambitious aim when other such productions as *Rockin' and Funk'n' Sordis* have singularly failed to incorporate the power of one medium into the other. The music ranges from rock 'n' roll to reggae, blue grass to ballads, and beer hall honky tonk to traditional Broadway high-kicking numbers.

Following the Hunter Valley Theatre Company's *Star Show* and Nottrod's *Freemason Tunes* albums, in mid-May two songs from *Starstud* were recorded onto a single which was released at the beginning of this month. The hope is that the single, "Rock 'n' Rollin' Bones" will rocket up the charts. The TN Company is working closely with Brisbane radio 4BK which is giving the single air-play and doing publicity for the show.

Starstud will see the Company back on the campus of the University of Queensland at the Schenell Theatre, (TN's production of Errol Bryant's *The Choir* was performed in the Cement Box theatre). When the Schenell first opened about 12 years ago it was the venue for many locally written musicals but it was gradually phased into a cinema. Currently it is mainly being used for movies, so *Starstud* is something of an experimental return to theatre.

Brisbane has recently experienced a boom in playwriting, but productions of these new plays are scarce. It is pleasing to see a professional theatre company that is not afraid to back local talent. With TN's current funding problems, the odds on *Starstud* to succeed is greater than usual, but if it follows the company's 1981 trend it should have no problem.

the ellis column

In memoriam: the King O'Malley Company

Over Greek hors d'oeuvres, Marnie, Lynch and I anxiously pondered the likely extinction of our theatre company because the grant we had got was so small and meant the likely wreckage of our fairly lives if we worked again this year for nothing. A waste of a good name, King O'Malley, we agreed over Metaxa in broady, but there it was: two pragmatic writers and commentators on feature film and magazine and an agency presented us before going on. We turned the string Theatre Board for halving our request, worked on a gloomy makeshift alliance with the Sydney Theatre Company (Ciolek and Chessa productions proudly printed), backed ineffectually over some points in our association, lapsed into a warm silence in which the smell of old friendship and good times remembered was not entirely lost, and parted. We may or may not work together again, it is a pity.

I'm writing a five thousand word letter to Marnie on the death wish. It's a bit learned, but we can't help both being over-educated country boys. I realise, as did Heugan when he broke with Gordon Welles, that I will not find again a great collaborator. I hope all will be well. I have my doubts.

There is nothing more than trying to run a theatre. It makes Kim Horne of us all, and the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. Too many come kill the coverage of youth. I fear it is beyond human beings of normal sensitivity. You need to be a beast.

Money of course would make a difference. For the kind of money one produces goes to develop one film script you could run a whole small theatre for a year. The money shrinkage in theatre beggars belief. Maybe theatre donations should be tax deductible too.

I feel both glad and miserable to have had a go. The bottom I knew was aplauded. The worry shorned my life, quite dramatically, with a heart attack, if that's what it was. I feel in the worst of decades it's necessary still to have a go. I wish I felt more confident. Confident about anything. I wish I was ten years younger. I did not help to found the new Australian theatre and buy up to birthplace in order to attend the appalling opening nights of Louis Nowra's tri-

lusions from Sanskrit. Who will move if I do not move? Who will fight if I do not fight? Chairman Mao had a way with words. He knew they grew out of the barrel of a gun. And there are fewer guns on that side of the tracks I know I belong to. We are being phased out, and multinational theatre again phased in. *Fractal*, by Ron Blair. *Archer's The Trial*, by Louis Nowra. *Director Write in Australia*, by Dave Allen. *Mrs Higgins on Hilda*, by Patrick White. Oh dear, dear.

This is the speech I gave at the opening of the O'Malley Season last year. It still applies, I think, but I am a tired man.

"I rise, in apology for the absence of my close friend David Williamson who is, alas and shock, well up the Amazon and beyond recall, to welcome all of you, a little early in your current hangovers I fear, to this rude and splintered cradle of our national drama, and the word of our Renaissance Reading, vintage 1980."

In this, my first harvest of the decade and my newly washed blue tie, I feel a member upon me as a respectable community leader to draw a to your attention that this grand old hotel, in which were made the ancient reputations of Ales Bore, of David Williamson, of Ron Blair, of Alma De Groen, of Peter Kenna part two, of Max Cullen part one before he went to Ireland to become a painter in oils, of Max Pugh who is without end, of Jude Kuring, of Anna Veksha, of Chris Heywood, of John Guden, of Don Cuddy part three, of Graham Bond, of Gary MacDonald, of Richard Wharmston, of Aaron Niccio, of Rex Crumplehorn, of John Bell, or as he is better known Macbell who never forgave a lover and whose nose in time grew very long, and the late, great, sad Kim Horne who learned too soon that reasonable gratitude is not to be found in this vale of crocodile tears — this grand old splintered ark of our Australian government has a certain history. I say as it bleeds its bones and all into its second decade of improvised and jerry-built nobility to live up to, and not much to live down.

In this worthy place therefore, we thank it a reasonable, and not only because as greedily landlocked I feel a growing need of the rest — to launch today this boisterous, whimsical, angry, patriotic, hairy and doggedly socialist venture, against all the long odds washed down on it by the Fraser age, now thank Christ only six short weeks from its end, and against, as well the contemptible and soon approaching McDonaldisation of our once proud film industry, for films to go which will, if successful, censor our very nation out of

our art, and our history out of our nation, and also against the continuing and heinous trial by fire regulation of the whole of the Sydney theatre scene. We thank it honourably, at least, to try to have a go, even on a subsidy of less than a quarter of a million, to discover what our national character is going this week, and next week and the week after, by at least trying out the visions of writers not yet emboldened and lathered by the usual adoration and curses of the Sunday press, and not yet led to their damnation in the shallows of Shalshbury Avenue, and by trying out the scope and strength of Australian actors for too long left to palely loiter in the *Argents* and *Cupheys* and tedious encumbrances of the dream dungers of Kerry Packard, Reg Ansett, Rupert Murdoch and Reg Grundy — dungers back to show how cheap and nasty our current nation really is in comparison with the superior American product. We believe, I think — though I have not yet cleared this dogma with my Board of Directors who are sadly drunk and indisposed, also that actors are a blessed and special breed of human being who should be shown to advantage in a place that magnifies instead of diminishing them, in the place that, and gives them the opportunity, as our nation will to implement the people they know from the culture they grew up in.

It is either a good or a bad thing that most Australian plays are now set in Russia, or South America, or the drawing room of Karl Marx, or the holiday cottage of DH Lawrence in Tharool, just as most Australian films, God help them, now involve an Alabama death driver caught in a time warp on the Nullarbor. Either, I suppose, we are adult enough now to realise these larger themes, or cowardly enough — again to cringe away from the myths that is here, from the dankies Australian pearlman, the criminal Australian olderwomen, and the coarse Australian poets and film makers and song writers and supermen we celebrate with a pinch of salt in this season. (As cowardice is vile, I fear) and it is now pretty apparent that a common kind of Australian theatre, that involving Australian content, and singing, dancing and a certain indefinable larkish chatup, it is in some danger of late, as it never was in the early Whitlam invention, and we hope to put it, in this honourable place, and in these next few years, before the fullness of the prophecies of Nostradamus and Peter West, a new lease of life and loving care. It therefore declare this first King O'Malley season open.

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 6.20 g/l
 100 ml

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**THE
NAKED
VICAR
SHOW**

GARY REILLY &
TONY SUTLER

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THEATRE *feature*

ANTHONY STEEL, recently appointed Artistic Director of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, talks to ROBERT PAGE

The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust has, since its inception in 1934, always used a substantial amount of the federal subsidy it receives to entrepreneur and back productions, from overseas and from within Australia. Yet never, in over 25 years, has there been in the organisation an artistic arbiter, or even an identifiable single person with whom lay the ultimate responsibility for the choice of shows that were created and/or toured.

Since the growth of the theatre profession and the creation of the Australia Council in the last decade or so, many of the Trust's other functions — channelling subsidy money, housing and administering companies — have been eroded, and the entrepreneurial arm remains as its most public activity and the only one in which it has no competitors. The standard and choice, though, of its productions have been questioned for some years, and more recently it is said that the Australia Council has seriously considered whether the Trust is worth as a subsidy and whether, indeed, it has a valid reason for existing at all.

Early this year an advertisement appeared in the papers for the position of "Artistic Director" of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, with no further job specifications, and there was much speculation as to what the post would entail and who would be appointed. There were not a few who thought this move was merely a sop to the funding bodies and that whoever got the job would hold little power, but rather

provide the organisation with a facade of artistic integrity, window dressing.

In May it was announced that Anthony Steel would be taking up the position, but no statement was forthcoming from him or the Trust about future initiatives or policies. It has taken several months before even the most general plans have been talked about, namely, says Steel bluntly, because "I have really had to write my own job specification and have it approved by the Board."

"I don't think the Trust had a clear idea of what kind of job they were offering — and nor did I, they certainly didn't make it clear in the advertisement nor at the interview. They did, though, want someone who would be employed fulltime by them, but in the end they agreed to my taking it on a consultancy basis, as I prefer to work as Anthony Steel and Associates, and not be completely restricted to one area."

Steel has, in the course of his career, worked in quite a number of artistic areas, but has spent the majority of his time in the music field. After sticking it out for five years in the family steel firm when he came down from Oxford, he first moved into the arts as General Manager of the London Mozart Players. From there he became Assistant General Secretary of the London Symphony Orchestra and went on to be Planning Manager of the Festival Hall. He admits to there having been a lucky coincidence with each move, but none more lucky than the one which brought him to Australia.

While at the Festival Hall, Steel had heard that the planned Adelaide Festival was looking to fill two positions, director of the Festival Centre Trust, and artistic director of the Festival staff. Walking over Waterloo Bridge to the appointment with Don Dunstan about one of these positions, with no particular desire to go to Australia, he decided he would accept only if he was allowed to take on both jobs and be paid a latter fee for the double task. Within 10 minutes of the interview Dunstan had agreed on both counts.

"An artistic director must be trying to please no one but himself."

Anthony Steel left Adelaide in 1978, "in need of a change", and went to manage the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hollywood Bowl. He "can't imagine that anywhere else a satisfactory after living in Southern California", but with a 13-year-old daughter in Sydney and Claire Dan's requests for him to come and look after her International Piano Competition, he did return, and has most recently run the Cluden International Theatre Season (*Liberation of Skopje*, *Amphitruon* and *De Horden*). That venture is now in recess, having lost money — particularly on the Greek tour — and "The Trust job came up just at the right time."

The result of the job specification that Steel has been putting out with the Board of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust takes the form of a two-pronged, general policy statement about what the organisation should be doing and where it is going. None of this, though, can take effect until 1983 because the advance planning for this year and next was done before his appointment.

The overall thrust of future AETT activity will relate to the fact that, in Steel's forthright terms, "The Trust is the national entrepreneur and it's about time it started behaving like one." He thinks it should "enrich the experience of the Australian theatre-goer by introducing him to new forms of theatre" and "discharge this responsibility nationwide and not just in the capital cities."

More specifically, he believes that the AETT should not be in direct competition either with commercial entrepreneurs or subsidised companies but should collaborate with both. Steel is happy for the Trust to insure, for instance, tours of overseas productions of quality, but which no other organisation would back. A case he cites is the tour of the Saddleirs' Wells Ballet (though of their second company) which the Brisbane Arts Centre requested — wanting for some

reason an English company to open the new complex. He will also accept AETT investment in commercial productions, so long as they are good of their kind and can be relied on to make money; his example here is the Edgley production of *Burnum* with Reg Livermore, opening in January, and a tour of *Amadeus* — neither of which shows are evidently to his personal taste, but which have both had overseas success and, hopefully, will be well done.

Steel is strongly against the Trust acting as a production house itself, a role for which it no longer has the facilities and in which it has too often, of late, associated itself with poor quality productions. This suggests we will no longer be seeing such questionable fare — questionable in terms of either content or production quality

as *11 rue de l'Amour*, *Pyjama Tops* and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* He suggests that the lack of an active artistic policy has been behind previous misfortunes, and that in lieu of one, the organisation has been too willing to work with anyone who has presented them with an idea — including mediocre directors both here and overseas. It has inevitably been the bad suggestions that have ended up at the Trust because they were not good enough to stand on their own feet.

Where the AETT is able to buy the rights to foreign plays, it looks likely that they will in future make them available to state companies, rather than mounting their own productions, and then possibly collaborate on national tours of state productions, though this was a possibility General Manager Jeffrey Joynton-Smith specifically turned down in a 74 interview in 1977. This could be a great advantage to subsidised companies, for whom it can often be difficult to obtain state rights to popular plays.

"The Trust is the national entrepreneur and it's about time it started behaving like one."



Anneke Asher and Robert Cuthbert in one of this year's fine imports: *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*



The U.S.A. Acting Company in *The Old Country*

"The ideal tour circuit for a particular product at the touch of a button."

As well as looking after local product, Anthony Steel rates as "high priority" the need to bring into the country styles of theatre not normally seen here — as he did with the International Theatre Season. But he thinks it should be a two-way process, reviving the World Theatre Exchange idea, and that whenever an Australian production comes up that is both top quality and suitable, efforts should be made to take it overseas. There has been nothing in that category for at least a year, in his opinion, but he looks forward to interesting work from, in particular, Ken Cramphorn at the Playbox, and John Komer's adaptation of *Josiah*, to open the Sydney Theatre Company's wharf theatre.

On the domestic level, the new Arts Centres, in and out of capital cities, represent to Steel a major demand for product that the AETT can supply. "It's all very well building these complexes, but no one seems to have thought about product to fill them and they could very well be standing magnificently empty for three quarters of the year. This is an area where the Trust, as national entrepreneur, should be in the ideal position to supply product, the situation has outgrown the Arts Councils, who are more suited to touring small shows around to village halls.

"The Board has already agreed to pay for a feasibility study of a sophisticated computer system that would match the demands of Arts



Robert Morley and Margo Lin in the four-act tour AETT tour of *The Old Country*. Centres and entrepreneurs, give the ideal tour circuit for a particular product at the touch of a button and even such information as what backing would be available. Everyone would be programmed in. It's too early to say what is the right way to go about it, but eventually I'd like to see Hong Kong and Manila, for example, programmed in too."

Steel is pleased that the AETT Board have accepted all these proposals for an ongoing policy and modus operandi, but when it comes down to specifics will there be tension with those who were previously in charge, however de facto, of artistic policy?

"I don't see any conflict, I suppose I am directly responsible to Jeffrey Joynton-Smith, and possibly the fact that I'm in a consultative capacity rather than on staff, may mean that I have to be more diplomatic than my temperament inclines me to be. Geoff Kessel, who had to take a lot of the



Bridgette Faxon



Trust's family (from left) Chris, Mary, and David



"It has clear, positive and important roles which no one else can sustain."

entrepreneurial responsibility, was a prime mover in getting an Artistic Director appointed, as he was fed up with being made responsible for things that weren't his area. One of the Trust's problems has been not knowing who to go to and grabbing at anyone who was willing to work with them. They've never had anyone who's even pretended to be competent to take the necessary decisions."

Clearly, though, decisions have been taken, and they must reflect some kind of policy, however misguided, of the previous regime. It may be that a taste for less traditional theatre will not please. Steel quotes Bernard Levin on the role of an artistic director: "that he is always a secondary creative artist, and more importantly that he should be trying to please no one but himself." "I have put to the Board that if an organisation appoints an artistic director, it must abide by his opinions and taste until it fires him, and I think they accept that."

The first year proper of the Steel regime will be 1983 and the programme cannot be finished until August 82 when the full financial situation will be known. This year's losses (*Coldwind*, *Heroes* and *Whose Life?*) mean that next year's ventures will be restricted to the *Barrow* and *Saddlers'* Wells tours and small productions like *A Lesson From Albee* and the New Zealand *Blood of the Lamb*.

Whatever the time lag, though, Anthony Steel is determined to make sure the AETT fulfils its role as the national entrepreneur. "I spent three years as a member of the Theatre Board saying it was a useless organisation, but it needn't be. It has clear, positive and important roles which no one else can sustain. Trust is its name and that trust is what it must fulfill."

JOHN PINDER in repartee with JACK HIBBERD on the fifth anniversary of the Last Laugh



John Pinder

This month John Pinder, Roger Evans, performers and staff, as well as a lot of Melbourne, celebrate five years of the Last Laugh theatre restaurant.

Over those five years the Last Laugh has not only provided a venue but has been a shaping forum and focus for many of Melbourne's eccentric breed of wits, satirists, comic actors, singers, musicians, magicians and circus performers.

John Pinder, socially an agreeable Fabiuff of a man, is modest when describing his role in establishing crucial venues for Melbourne's quizzical and subversive artists. He states that the TF Muck Ballroom, The Flying Trapeze and The Last Laugh were merely the result of a series of intuitive accidents.

JH: Surely there has been some planning and deliberation?

JP: The Last Laugh was a more conscious creation than The Flying Trapeze.

JH: I refuse to believe that they have all been due to intuition and chance.

JP: In my three major venues I've set out to create a venue with the right atmosphere and right feeling, the right relationship between audience and performers. It seems to work. Performers then seem to crawl out of the woodwork.

Pinder, a New Zealander, is from Dunedin. His first aspirations were to be a painter in the tortured Van Gogh style. Thwarted in this department, he worked back stage and designed sporadically for local theatres. He came to Australia in 1966. On a whim. He worked as an ABC radio journalist for four years, settling in Melbourne around Christmas 1969.

JP: I discovered Carlton first, drugs second, rock-and-roll third, then finally the theatre.

JH: What drew you to the theatre?

JP: From 1967 to 1972 I was on the fringes of theatre. One or two of the bands I organised concerts for, had worked at La Mama and the Pram Factory. Alternatively, some of the APG actors did revue stints between bands at the Ballroom.

JH: You saw a lot of the new vigorous theatre over that period?

JP: Yes. A fair amount. But it wasn't until I went to Europe and England for over a year in 1972 that I became totally absorbed by theatre.

JH: Anything specific?

JP: Le Grand Magic Circus at the Roundhouse.

JH: Why?

JP: They had everything, both glamour and raunchiness, a kind of total rough theatre, employing all the popular theatre skills apart from those of the circus.

JH: Anything else?

JP: The *Hole Family Show* at the Pram Factory on my return.

Up until then Pinder found much of theatre somewhat constructed. He still finds the legitimate theatre a dead place to go. He can't sit through a play. He has to stand up the back, slurp coffee, and smoke. He feels it should all be done in three to ten minute fits, as Brecht so well knew.

JH: You spoke before of the right relationship between audience and performers.



The *Book, Brothers and friends*

JP: I like, indeed insist, that the performers see the audience, to establish that two-way interchange. It's really rather basic isn't it? Despite *Murder's Little Horror Show*, I remain adamantly anti-technological.

JH: What styles of show and performance work best at The Last Laugh?

JP: Physical and musical, relatively non-verbal. The Last Laugh cannot sustain dialogue between actors for more than a few minutes. It has to be straight out.

JH: This links the Last Laugh with music hall and vaudeville.

JP: I feel those links very strongly, not only with the Travels etc, but also reaching back to the spectacular melodramas that dominated Melbourne theatre in the 1880s.

Roger Evans is from Sydney where he once owned Kustoms, more a display centre for the Sydney street art



*The Last Laugh Theatre
Restaurant and Tea
Room. Ralph Kells*

*Cover Of
Photo: Punch Heales*

than a theatre restaurant or cabaret, according to Pinder. Evans had The Husky Berkleys and Captain Matchbox visit Kellions for drinks, sold up, and came to Melbourne. He and Pinder kept running into one another looking at potential venues. They decided to team up.

JH: Whose idea was it to deconstruct the environment of The Last Laugh, to create an auditorium and front-of-house style?

JP: Roger and I talked about it at length. The result, which is a cartoon of a night club, was a blend of Sydney Glass and Melbourne Rough, with a touch of the circus.

JH: There was a lot of mockery abroad in the early days. From yourself as a vile MC and the writers.

JP: I'd read a lot about European cabaret whilst at the Flying Trapeze teaching and flagellating the bourgeoisie. It was essentially a technique I used to break down inhibitions.

JH: Were you aiming for a particular kind of audience?

JP: Well, we deliberately tried not to be fashionable. We were quite anti-fashion, not wanting to stroke the pretensions of snobs and trends.

JH: Have you succeeded?

JP: A survey by the Victorian Ministry for the Arts showed that we have the greatest social diversity of audience of any theatre in Melbourne.

Pinder feels very strongly that the ABC and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust have a lot to answer for. The ABC for its centralisation of comedy in Sydney, thus denying many of Melbourne's most gifted comic performers the opportunities automatically extended to their Sydney counterparts. The AETT has failed lamentably to pick up several entirely tourable shows. He hopes to redress this to a certain extent through his new room, Le Joke, which is a kind of open house for stand-up comedians, dogs and cabaret freaks. He hopes to entice commercial television into utilising the talents of the best that appear there.

JH: You've concentrated on group-created shows and not writers.

JP: That's because the group-created show is a recent Melbourne tradition and because that style of show suits The Last Laugh for the reasons I outlined before. The only writer I've used was Louis Nowra with his show *Slims*. It was a box-office disaster.

JH: Why?

JP: It was partly my fault. I should've read the script! It was boring. I pulled the show off after some ten days. And Louis Nowra left for Sydney. I now try to use fringe artists and groups. They're committed to their own material.

JH: (groaning) That counts me out?

JP: It certainly does.

JH: What of the future?

JP: I want to follow through with Circus OZ which is struggling for support and may well sink. I'm interested in changing the attitudes of corporations towards funding, away from the snob approach of Art towards popular theatre and entertainment.

JH: The Last Laugh?

JP: I'm not sure I'll be there in five years, but I'm sure it will be.

JH: Do I detect a streak of melancholia?

JP: More mono-depressive, Doc. The melancholic side has recently been expressed in restlessness. I've done all that. What can I do that is new? I don't want my life to go to plan. I'm frightened by that. I want to open new doors. Hence Le Joke. The time is ripe, as in the late sixties, to attack political targets, the New Patriarchy and all that insidious bull. Yet part of me wants to adopt a less directly catalytic role, to use my experience in a more detached way. The aging process?

JH: Perhaps the middle-age head-spread?

JP: Loose, Skinny, I'm thirty-six and have just discovered Jung!

JH: Seriously, congratulations to you and Roger, and all those others involved, in The Last Laugh. Hope you have a terrific fifth birthday.

JP: Thank you. We will.



Real Americans

by Karl Levent

OR, Chesterton said "There is nothing the matter with Americans except their ideals: the real American is all right, it is the ideal American who is all wrong." As present on New York stages real Americans are abundant, thanks to some real American playwrights, one of whom is not without his ideal.

The biggest group of such genuine American types can be found on the small stage of the Circle Rep in Lanford Wilson's *A Tale Told*. Then in the third of the three plays Lanford Wilson has written about the Talley family of Lebanon, Missouri it shows us the parents of the yet unconceived hero of *The Fifth of July* and takes place the same evening as Talley's *Folly*, in which we saw Sally Talley become engaged to "kiss Jew" Matt Friedman in Edith Oliver of the New Yorker wittily put it "a courtship blessed by the Pulitzer Prize." *A Tale Told* shows us what was happening at the big house, the Talley Place, on Independence Day, 1944, while Sally was down in the farmhouse being wooed by Matt. A sadist Sally appears at the end of *A Tale Told* to be the two plays neatly together.

When Talley's *Folly* was a finely played drama, *A Tale Told* is the whole orchestra. It is a big sprawling family drama, alive with characters, conflicts and machinations. I'm not sure if this was Lanford Wilson's intention, but with a fortune scribbled he has created a former play, complete with characters you love to hate and real-dramatic revelations. With all its family infighting and wheeking and deking it most resembles Lillian Hellman's *The*

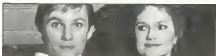
Little Foxes now on view with Elizabeth Taylor at the Martin Beck Theatre.

The play begins with the gentlemen of the house congratulating themselves on scoring all "that Jew" with guns (Part of Wilson's art is to first present a bunch of despicable reflections then throughout the evening make you come to care for them in varying degrees.) There is to be a dinner for young Buddy Talley, home on leave from Italy because his grandfather is supposedly dying. Grandpa, the ruthless patriarch of the Talley family, may be shady but he goes on to show there's lots of conniving if it's left in him yet. Buddy running around is Buddy's wife Olive — she's all elbows and sharpness and I'd like to call her Angular Olive (Phyllis Welling is comically exacting, while adding just the right touch of pathos.) There's Eldon Talley, Buddy's father, who runs the prosperous family business, but is dominated by Grandpa's "a bookkeeper." His wife, Nettie, Buddy's mother, is a stepmother of plain strength in the household. Buddy's spenser aunt, Lonnie, fat and better-tongued, is dying of cancer before our eyes. As well as Buddy's sister, Sally, there's his younger brother Trump, whose death on the Pacific is announced during the first act and who haunts the stage throughout the play.

Now that's just the family — there are others. The first act is a mayhem of business take-overs, degeneracy, blackmail, and telegram of death, but Wilson

orchestrates the melodramatic scenes and going of the large cast with great skill and flourish. In the second act, despite continuing contrivances, the play loses some of its momentum. Partly responsible for this are Talley's speeches to the audience about his death and the stupidity of war. Talley is a character from another play (a much more modern one, perhaps *The Fifth of July*) and although his presence is an interesting theatrical device, greater economy would result in greater effect. The character of Lonnie is important because it is she who hands the liberating torch to Sally who in turn passes it to Kennedy in *The Fifth of July*, yet Lonnie is not yet fully realized and the detail of her getting redmen poisoning while passing facts on clocks is none too convincing. The second act "needs work" as they say, but it does not dim a remarkable creative effort on Wilson's part.

The performances of the large cast are consistently good, while Marshall W. Mason has directed with great style. At no time do you doubt that this is a family you're watching — and that is the highest compliment to cast and director that could be paid. And let's hear it for scenic designer, John Lee Beatty. First, the romantically Gothic hearthside of Talley's *Folly*, then the Mark Twain style, white veranda of the Talley Place. Now in *A Tale Told* on the tiny Circle Rep stage he creates the illusion of a large Victorian



Richard Thomas and Tancrède Killy in *The Fifth of July*

parlour with a staircase and lobby beyond — a playing area, with enough seats to satiate even Lanford Wilson.

Meanwhile, uptown at the New Apollo, on the whole verandah of *The Fifth of July* there is a new Kenny Talley. The original Kenny (on Broadway) was Christopher Reeve whose Superman training proved inadequate in resisting a merely adequate performance. His replacement is Richard Thomas whose fame was achieved as John-Boy in the television series *The Waltons*. (Though Mr Chesterton might not agree, for a greater part of the American public, John-Boy was a quintessential real American.)

Mr Thomas' presence now provides the play with the solid centre it previously lacked. While he cannot manage the right ardour here for the early comic throw-away lines, in the emotional scenes of the second act he provides an intensity that puts all the satellite performances in perfect balance. Suddenly Swenson Kuro's flamboyant (and Tony-winning) Girth is in perspective. Indeed all the performances are much more confident, making for a much more cohesive play. Even the uplaid ending seems more logical. The second act (save Superman) moves like a speeding bullet and shows Lanford Wilson at his most accomplished.

With this Talley Trilogy, Wilson has created a new role for American actors. He has an unerring ear for American speech, moving from Missouri redneck to California drug freak with easy stride. His originality lies in his ability to combine mid-western authenticity with New York sophistication in a sort of combination of William Inge and George Kaufman that has not happened before among American playwrights.

It is Wilson's compassion for all his characters that makes them 'real'. Yet, he is an American playwright with an ideal, pragmatic and terrified though it may be (Shudder away, Chesterton!) He is clearly a disciple of positivism, showing characters as they are while suggesting that things could and will be better. It is a philosophy that creates a genuine social dynamic — against odds, some will go through with grace and dignity and there will be a positive progression.

As well as this total of Talleys, the Longbeard Theatre's revival of David Mamet's *American Buffalo* goes to three Americans that are perhaps too real for some audiences' comfort. As these profane petty criminals include Al Pacino as Teach, the junk shop is really jarring.

Central Park is the setting for a fine play by Kevin Wade. *Key Exchange* where a



Harry Reems and Leanne Kline in *What The Butler Saw*

pair of lovers and a young bridegroom meet on their bicycles on a series of weekends. Creating convincing New Yorkers requires writing that is as subtle as the characters' love riding. Enter a young American playwright, Kevin Wade.

At the Henry Street's New Federal Theatre we have just had two very real Americans in the goods of Elgish Muhammad and Malcolm X in Laurence Holder's worthy *When The Chicken Came Home To Roost*. American history brought to life.

You might have thought Joe Orton's *What The Butler Saw* was English material, but the cast in the recent production at the Westside Arts Theatre would have convinced you it was American. Despite the impressive performances, I'd like to thank Joe Orton would be pleased to have written for a former poet star going legitimate (Harry Reems of *Deep Throat* fame) and transgressive Holly Woodlawn, late of the wondrous Andy Warhol menagerie Joe Orton, if not Chesterton, might have recognised the pioneering spirit and cried, "Only in America!"

Russia and Restoration re-visited

by Irving Wardle

New writers may complain about the difficulties of getting a foothold on the English stage, but their problem is as nothing compared to that of Racine, Lope de Vega, Goethe and other classical giants whose British cultural xenophobes have condemned to an eternity in the alien's queue.

Of all these unfortunate, the one least likely to slip through the barrier was Alexander Ostrovsky against whom nearly a century were lighted up back in the sixties when his reputed masterpiece *The Storm* flopped from a great height at the National Theatre. However, a fresh contingent of Ostrovsky has been smuggled into the RSC's Warehouse Theatre which now has the British operators' stuck outside in a hopeless queue. He doubtless has much to do with the luxury casting of Alan Howard in a studio show, but if there is any justice in the theatrical world, Adrian Noble's magnificent production should lodge *The Forger* in our standard repertoire.

As a first sample of Ostrovsky's output, this piece is well chosen for a public unacquainted with the patriarchal society which occupies his vast national canvas. You do not have to know about the tyrannous autocrats or the ranks of the Tsarist Civil Service to grasp its stirring point: the familiar Gogol-esque premise of a pious sophisticate brooding a peak of provincial folk. As the intruder is a tragic actor accompanied by a stagee comedian, there are plenty of other immediate associations from *Don Quixote* to *Gods*. Equally accessible is the opening evocation of an estate ruled by a shortlived queen bee, who is forever being cheated in deals with the proximity, while keeping her adoptive niece in a state of perpetual dependence.

When her longlost nephew, the down-and-out tragedian Gerasimov, turns up on the estate, concealing his disreputable

profession by playing the grand gentleman, you sit back in secure expectation of a brisk comic development in which the handsome Ransau will be done out of the treasure chest that never leaves her job-enriched bosom, and that poor Alonzo will get his jowly Ostrovsky fulfils some of these promises and supplies some beautifully organized comic surprises not least between Gennady and his comic sidekick, who seems being cast as Spenswick to his lordly companion's master, and spins the beans to one of the lady's upper.

However, the development is not brisk. Even the scene I have just mentioned comes after the spy has been opening her heart on the subject of the corrupting effects of servitude. To see her then slipping back into the servile role, and betraying her new friend's secret to the mistress she detests is one example of the Ostrovsky effect. Writing a comedy does not mean cracking jokes all night: that is one pleasure, one source of insight among others. And as the action grows, taking in cold-hearted villainy, attempted suicide, and simple human despair, what takes shape is a generous, Dostoevskian indignation that puts this dramatist in a class by himself.

Struggle-forward as that may sound, the play could go badly adrift if a production insisted on the status rules and manners of Ostrovsky's Russia, and unresponsive to the shifts between peasant rebellion and grotesque satire.

You get all that homogeneity laid out by Mr Noble, a new young director with a marvelous command of tone and dramatic pace. But beyond his basic grasp of the genre convention, he also projects the idea of acting as a metaphor for the whole play. At its centre is the virtuoso double act of Gennady (Alan Howard) and Arkady (Richard Pasco), playing the status game between themselves although they are both stony broke, and based on the notion that the low-class comic Arkady is better known inside the profession than his Byronically posturing companion. But by degrees it emerges that everyone else apart from the poor young lovers is acting as well.

Barbara Leigh-Hunt's tight-fisted Ransau plays an anguished chanty, her callow young tutor uses the role of merely lover, his tongue helping out for his money, the whole pack of respectable hangers-on who close ranks around her to freeze out the needy lovers and the vagrant actors are likewise playing a role – and playing it very badly. When Mr Howard delivers his final, magnificent outburst on this demoralized crew, the lines are sensuously drawn but seem merely self-indulgent

people who don't know how to act, and live artists who can afford to be generous. I have rarely seen a show in which style and statement are so recognisably combined.

This, too, is the effect of which Edward Bond is aiming in his new piece *Restoration* (Royal Court), a Brechtian musical which puts high comedy through the same socialist crucibles that Bond has previously applied to Greek and Shakespearean tragedy.

It starts as straight Restoration parody with the sight of Simon Callow's Lord Arc having fun (through his inheritance) arranging himself luxuriously against a tree so as to win the heart of a wealthy businessman's daughter and thus avoid the odium of courtship. Stylistically Bond has done his homework and inflated Congreve dialogue to a pitch just short of outright parody. More important than the frolic, though, is the figure of young Bolt, arriving from his lordship's country estate, and landing us into the below stairs society which is the show's real domain.

The objective is to arrive at social statement through stylistic contrast. Up in the rooms of Lord Arc and his grotesque old mother (affording too brief a glimpse of an atrociously transformed Ironic Bond) all is comedy: even murder and villainous betrayal. Down below, it is as dark and joyless as anywhere in the prison house of Bond's England.

The defect in this scheme is that Bond makes his point so successfully through the comic scenes that there is no need for the accompanying soundbites of working-class protest drama. Still less for the parabolic songs, which confine rather than illuminate the mood: despite Nick Hornby's negative *Entertainment* settings.

Now withdrawn from the Apollo, City James's zoophantic satiric, *Charles Chatterbox's* *Chatterbox*, takes its place among the royal wedding horrors along with the Hong Kong wahngap torch and a limited Prince Charles and Lady Diana I saw in a shop window the other day along with an offer of "Free Paterns and Three Balls".

ITI
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THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

The new ITI periodical, *Theatre International*, replaces the journal *International Theatre Information* and is edited on behalf of the ITI by the British Centre for International Theatre Studies (CITS), 60 Friar Street, London WC2E 9BT. Send cheque to International Theatre Institute, 1 rue Molière, 75015 Paris, France.

THEATRE OF NATIONS — 82

The ITI festival for mutual understanding between peoples and cultures. Each national ITI Centre has been asked to prepare up to three productions of high standard to represent their country. Stage plays, dance music, music theatre and puppet theatre are included. Any proposals should be made urgently to the Australian Centre of the ITI. Expenses for board and lodging will be met by the festival committee, but travelling expenses will be borne by the visiting theatre companies. Proposals are also invited for theatre forums and workshops. Sofia, Bulgaria, 20 June-6 July, 1993.

QISTT

The international organisation of scenographers and theatre technicians has initiated a project for preservation and protection of monuments of theatre technology. Please forward information on theatre museums, collections and archives, fittings and technical equipment directly to Polish QISTT Centre, Młota 1, 00-578 Warsaw.

PORTUGAL

The 4th International Theatre Festival of Iberian expression will include performances from FITEI, Rua de Passos, 21 P, 1, Sala 5, 4000 Porto, Portugal, 7-12 November, 1991.

BELGIAN THEATRE GROUP

Eigentids Podium, a theatre group from Belgium, would like to tour their production *Luci and Gennadi* to Australia. It is based on James Joyce's novel *Exiles* and the group will gladly supply a video tape of excerpts from their play.

Write to: Roger Vroemen, Director, EIGENTIDS PODIUM, Jan Nieuwland 20, B-2000 ANTWERP, Belgium.

ACT

Canberra in bad voice

UNDER MILKWOOD SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL WE CAN'T PAY

by Janet Hesley

Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas. Canberra Youth Theatre, Garran House, ACT. Opened July 12, 1981
Director: Gill Kelly
(4 months)

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll by Ray Lawler. Canberra Repertory, Theatre House ACT. Opened July 15, 1981
Director: Pamela Rosenzweig. Stage: His cousin Steven Trosky
(4 months)

We Can't Pay! We Won't Pay! by Dore Fa' Anu. Centre, ANU. Canberra ACT. Opened July, 1981
Director: Camille Blunden. Stage Manager: Brooke Ryan. Bill McClellan.
Cost: Anne Yellie, Jenny Briggs, John Gidley, Jane McMillan, Michael White, Brendan Ryan
(Continues)

Three of the plays is a good sample of the variety of theatrical nourishment that the National Capital provides virtually all the time these days. But the question I am left with is, How Long, O Lord, how long must we wait for a professional company in the ACT? And if I must focus that implied criticism of local efforts more sharply, I would suggest that the principal crisis in which more emphasis is required on training in the basic skills of the theatre is that of speech. Eloquence may be a dirty word these days, but there is no pay for audiences in listening (or trying to listen) to poorly produced voices incapable of modulation or even of proper articulation.

Of the three plays under review, perhaps the logical starting point is *Under Milkwood*. Not only is this a play in which the command of language and vocalisation is supremely important, it is also reasonable to set a youth theatre as a training ground for the adult actors of the future. This production had some strong points. It was "theatre in the round", since walls of the hall being taken up by two-storey boxes constructed of scaffolding. Coloured spots focused on



Under Milkwood - Youth Theatre

each speaker in turn, with the centre of the stage firmly occupied by Blind Captain Cal, strange of the collective consciousness of Milkwood. The rich exploration that the play offers of the nexus between dreams and subterfuge dreams and waking life was rarely realised, and if the constant movement to locate new speakers was distracting and strenuous, the production

clearly stunted the dramatic imagination of the performers — an important aim for youth theatre.

But this play, though it will always be hard to look at, must be easy on the ear; and here was where the failure lay. They were not not to attempt Welsh accents, but the lack of attention to the diction of the play was worrying. There were one or two fresh, youthful voices gifted with natural clarity, but in general shouting was substituted for diaphragmatic production, and all too often the ends of words, or even whole phrases, were lost.

In Repertory's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* this failing was less excusable. No charitable refusal to condemn can be applied to a company of adults, and in this play, at least, one might expect the diction, being Australian, to be within the scope of most actors in a very small theatre. But it was largely because of poorly trained voices that so much of the dramatic impact was lost. The sudden storms of emotion that are pivotal to the movement of the play inevitably spluttered out because the performers lacked the skill to transmute the psychological violence that generates the physical violence.

And so it is, these failings were predictable in these two plays. Canberra Youth Theatre has never had much stress on diction, and Canberra Repertory, even in the days of its glory, was stronger in the vocal than the verbal field. From Camille Blunden's production of *We Can't Pay! We Won't Pay!* I expected something better. It was marginally better; and some allowance must be made for the difficulty of coping with the echoing caverns of the ANU Arts Centre. The most successful performance came from John Oakley (Greenman), who managed to modulate from hysterical nervous energy to a calmer mode in a way which captured the dynamics of Fa's fierce but Anne Yellie (Anonnet), though an experienced actress, was unable to master these vocal shifts, relying far too heavily on gestures and facial delivery at top speed and volume, and the infection spread to her less experienced colleagues. The intense tension of the production allowed virtually no pauses for reflection, or even for breath, and so masked any nobility that the play might hold. It was literally exhausting, for the audience no less than the players.

Well, in September Fortune Theatre is mounting Fa's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Presumably our professional company is about to be born, for Fortune's productions have always been completely competent, and sometimes brilliant. *Under Milkwood* was unforgettable. I live in hope!



by Michael Le Moine

The Paley Center for Media, New York, NY
 Created July 20, 1981
 With Alexander May
 ©1982 Alexander May

Shen, Kim Carpenter and Tony Strahan's experimental show in the Dymally Theatre at Winnetka, is the dramatic equivalent of a crossword puzzle.

Before the production opened, director/designer R. M. Carpenter was reported in the *St. Louis Morning Herald* as saying he would rather the show was reviewed by art critics than the one critics. Regrettably, by the end of the first week, none of the art critics (which had accepted the challenge)

Carpenter, with a hunted look, said this was probably because they all hated theatre. Trying to reassure him that not all

"Well, don't you realize," he replied, burning wisely, "the central character is Magritte. An art critic would have known that at once!"

Undaunted, I suggested that perhaps the 80%, or so of the audience who shared my ignorance would be as appreciated a note to the effect in the programme. Hedrowood. It was evidently like asking the computer to go away One Across. He was, he explained, reluctant to spell out too much because he wanted each member of the audience to reach their own interpretation of the show.

Still pursuing clues, I consulted a book on Magritte, which contained the following usually obscure from the master himself:

"If one looks at a thing with the intention of trying to discover what it means, one ends up no longer seeing the thing itself, but thinking of the question that has been raised. One cannot speak a word mystery; one must be silent about it."

This is the sort of misleading claymore artists and would-be artists have been hiding behind for decades. It is an absurd suggestion to try and separate the sense of sight from the other senses and from the faculty of intellect for a civilized human being, to look is to enquire. Descartes' famous formulation was not "I think, ergo sum," but *Cogito, ergo sum*.

The set is all black, a steeply raked stage with trapdoors, a reasonable walkway and five TV screen-sized bathtubs at the back. A miniature city with skyscrapers and freeways is suspended upside down from the ceiling and viewed the auditorium.

Alexander Hays, as the Foreigner, also Magnifico, alias the man in the bowler hat, as warning that money, threatening and ludicrously, when he is followed and strangely preyed upon by the other four actors, Su Cruchank, Samson Eddy, Christine Mahoney and George Shindler.

They all commanded attention, with performances that were very concentrated and expressive, mainly in music or monologues. The action was frequently mystifying, but generally intriguing, so boredom is not the problem. The problem is the structure, which is unsatisfyingly loose and episodic, with jarring changes of character for different acts. The *Requiem*

The potent aphorism not fully realized because of a pervasive refusal to give the audience a medium of some kind with the message, a continuing thread of plot or structure to guide them through the jungle of images. I say pervasive, because I am sure the company has a much clearer idea of where they are, and are used what they are, and are not.

why, then they ever pass on to the audience, who would probably sympathize with the ideal if they were properly presented. This theme, because with a little focusing and clarification, the production could be very good indeed.

On the weekends, Alex Hay has been making up for his complete silence as the Paganist by performing his own one-man-show, *The Pagan Serpent*, at the late-night affiliation Downtown Thru a lively collection of homosexuals, nudists, Scottish folkies and spooky ghost stories. Hay's subtle mastery of his audience is a joy to behold, and he tells his stories with great clarity and ease.

Another current gem on Sydney's Fox is *A Good Man Character Brown*, which is following three weeks at the Ensemble's Milton's Point Theatre with three weeks at the Philip Street Theatre. It is, according to the Ensemble, the most performed musical in the world, and this first-rate production shows why.

The company, under designer-director Frank Blackford, bring to these last part the mixture of vigor and deadpan comic timing that is needed. *Lyne* (Annette Bening) is a lady, Robyn Laye gives a warm, humorous and perceptive rendering of thumb-sucking blanket-wielding Liane, Craig Lambert's honest, lovable Charlie Brown wins a lot of sympathy and Lilianna Chikina's Patty and Gregory Crampton's Schneider are excellent in support. But the show-stopper is undoubtedly the Ensemble's Box Office Manager David Young, who contributes a singing and dancing Broadway to remember, catching exactly the cartoon expressions. This is a down-surge at its best here.

The great achievement of Schulz's comic strip is that its mindless humour allows adults to be thoroughly sentimental without feeling embarrassed or guilty about it. This production, pitched at just the right level, is alternately funny, sad and wise, and sometimes all three at once. It is a delight from start to finish.



Maurice Aronson (Ahmed) and Peter Carmody (Norm) in *Shade's Sister's* *Norm and Ahmed*

Funny and sad, and a let down.

NORM AND AHMED, THE DEATH OF MINNIE, THE WINTER'S TALE

by Barry O'Connor

Norm and Ahmed written and directed by Alan Buzo. Sydney Spirey Wayside Theatre. Sydney NSW. Opened July 1 1983.
Cast: Norm Peter Carmody, Ahmed Maurice Aronson.

The Death of Minnie by Barry Dickson, Director: Les Peck.
Cast: Minnie Linda Blake.

The Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare, adaptation Ian Warren. NSW Theatre of the Oval. Sydney Theatre Sydney NSW. Opened July 21 1984.
Director: Ian Warren. Actors: Linda Colloff, Stage Manager Grant Forster. Musical arrangements: Steven Smith. Cast: John Colloff, Noel Fildes, Christine Green, Colin Allen, Nicola Ross, Marika Burrell, Colin Thompson, David London, Yvella Wagner, Margaret Henderson, Steve Blight, Bill Eggertson, Margi Brown, Stewart Chisholm, Mousham David Pys, Danny Fine, Chris Ashburnham.

Shade's Sister's latest is an all-Australian double-bill of one-act plays. Alan Buzo's *Norm and Ahmed* and Barry Dickson's *The Death of Minnie*. Both of these plays use the precariously intimate space that is the Wayside Theatre in King's Cross.

Norm and Ahmed, which Buzo wrote as early as 1967, is now updated and directed by the playwright himself, making his dimensional debut. The play is about a late night encounter between an Asian student and a middle-aged Australian bigot who is red-necked, near-blue and dangerous.

Sometimes Mr Carmody seems to make Norm too understandable, too sympathetic perhaps, so that signs of intelligent life escape through the characterisation. The actor seems to have moved becoming the character, holding himself back as a morally remote distance. Monroe Reimers is very fine as Ahmed, whose urbanity and cautious good breeding answer Norm's vulgarity and over-

whelmingly Ocker charm.

Barry Dickson's *The Death of Minnie* is a one-hander which Shade Sydney's artistic director, Linda Blake, has fully written her grasp. Under Les Peck's direction, Miss Blake shares with her audience (unfortunately a skeleton crew at the ill-favoured Saturday matinee I attended) the last night in the life of Minnie Mankowitz, a lonely old Jewish who occupies a down-and-out room in South Yarra. Addressing her dead father with backward glances, Minnie recounts the disappointments and joys of too many of those of her life; she marvels at the industry — her own world from a fund of malapropisms — of it all. It's all very funny and sad. Minnie gives up trying to be brave and takes cyanide. At that moment the faltering electricity decides to work, fully illuminating Minnie's tragedy. Plain industry!

The Theatre of the Oval has a proud record, and, in this the International Year of Disabled Persons, one looks to this company with high hopes. Unfortunately their present production of *The Winter's Tale* does not completely fulfil these expectations.

Ian Warren's adaptation retains the bare bones of Shakespeare's play about adultery, jealousy, banishment and reconciliation. (The original was a play about time, but it is no longer so in this guise.) The story is told in high language, and is narration from both on and off the stage, song and dance are also brought to the aid of the exposition. All this, however, makes for rather a confusion of signals. Although — I would have thought — the logical language that could be equally well understood by non-hearers and hearers alike.

The singing and the choreography left much to be desired; the dancing was particularly predictable. More invention was needed, too, in overcoming the limitations of the Stables space. One contrast for a large cast made for a lot of tedious running about in the dark.

In fine after their *Love*, the Theatre of the Oval's *Winter's Tale* is a decided let down.

Integrity and razzle dazzle

ROCKY HORROR SHOW

by Adrian Wintle

The Rocky Horror Show by Richard O'Brien. American Trading Company in Civic Theatre. Waga Waga NSW. Opened Wednesday 23rd May, 1983.
Director: Peter Hurdles. Design: Anthony Bellini. Musical Director: John Cummings. Lighting design: Peter Hurdles. Stage Manager: Nicola Mackwell and Neil Chandler.

Cast: Narrator: Kevin Brown, Spider Lady: Rita Ralph, Janet: Jenny Webster, Brad: Robin Copp, Riff Raff: Bob Harris, Magenta: Debra May, Columbia: George Aronson, Frank a' Frank: Terry O'Connell, Rocky: Wayne Piggam, Eddie: Danny Holman, Dr Scott: Kim Hallett.

(Professional)

Peter Barclay's farewell RTC production gave American audiences their last chance to prosper the fusion of theatrical integrity and razzle-dazzle of colour and movement that has characterised his approach to large-scale musicals with the company.

By electing to stage *Rocky*, Barclay actually jumped on the revival bandwagon, and inadvertently ended the RTC's drought period that lasted from early May with *Such a Life* (self a revival) until July 22.

Rocky was overcharged fare, astounding ear and eye in a swirling amalgam of music and movement. By comparison with the RTC's 1978 production of the show, Barclay's production emerged as the more forthright and uncompromising of the two.

Barclay's splendidly grotesque set undoes Gothic atmosphere, leaving to perfection O'Brien's gallery of campily grotesque characters. Jenny Webster and Robin Copp brought *frustration* and vocal assurance to Janet and Brad. Terry O'Connell's Frank a' Frank was a magnificently ingenious creation, Bob Harris' Riff Raff snarled and growled with evil intent, Debra May and George Aronson were at once gross and compelling as, respectively, Magenta and Columbia, Wayne Piggam was a Rocky of shining innocence, Kevin Ralph a splendidly voiced Spider Lady, and Justin Byrne a characterful Narrator. I couldn't understand, though, why Dr Scott was played by a woman (Kim Hallett).

I saw Profile blazed out the music, with the cast joyously competing for amplitude, harmony, and various sonic and electric effects in up the charging pace of this production.

review

Heavy discussion
and light farceCROSSING NIAGARA
HABEAS CORPUS

by Lucy Wagner

Crossing Niagara by Alison Alagra, Marian Street Theatre, Sydney NSW. Opened July 1982.
 Director: John Milson. Designer: Peter Corbitt. Lighting: Tony Venables. Stage Manager: Victor Ashford. Cost: Rosella. Robert van Marckenberg, Carlo, Geoff Corbitt.
 (Professionals)

Habeas Corpus by Alan Bennett. Hunter Valley Theatre Company. Playhouse Newcastle NSW. Opened July 1982.
 Director: Anne Neume. Designer: Bill Haycock. Stage Manager: Fran Stanton.
 Cost: John Doyle, Lorne Crutchbank, David Wood, Melissa Ray, John Kirby, Jonathan Baggis, Nancy Hansen, Julie Hodgson, Allan McArthur, Frances Kirby, Terry Corbitt.
 (Professionals)

The appointment of John Milson as the new Artistic Director of Marian Street clearly heralded a change in policy for the previously unambiguously boulevard theatre — Milson is known for his "alternative" work at Perth's Hole in the Wall and Brisbane's TN companies, and his first production was greeted with interest.

His choice of opening show was *Crossing Niagara*, by Peruvian writer Alonso Alagra, a play Milson directed in Perth and for which he has brought to Sydney actor Robert van Marckenberg, who starred in the WA production, and Geoff Corbitt, previously with Milson in Queensland. Perhaps the piece has aged in the few years since its production at the Hole in the Wall, but it could hardly be deemed a smooth transition for Kilian patron from light comedy to supposedly more meaty fare. Rather, this two-hander, based on night-raps walker Blonden and the youth he carried across the Niagara Falls on his shoulders, came across as a pseudo-philosophical talk-piece belonging more to the 60's than the 80's.

Alagra has dreamed up a relationship between a young American fan and the Frenchman which results in their combining to form a new creature that they dub "scarus", symbol of earth/body and searing spirit. The partnership gives much opportunity for heavy-handed dis-

cussion of other such meaningful topics — "ambition, fear, obsession" — and little for dramatic action. Peter Cooke's inventive set is actively used for little more than a few swings on the trapeze, and disappears entirely (in do half the audience) for the interminable, dark and sticky pick-a-back ride over the falls.

Robert van Marckenberg's Blonden, though seeming a little uncomfortable on opening night, gave credibility to the self-containment and anxiety paired with sudden attacks of rage and panic the playwright has attributed to the tightrope artist. His low key, neurotic performance was unfortunately undermined by Geoff Corbitt's forced youthful exuberance and unlikably American accent as the already infuriating Carlo.

If Milson was relying on the past response to this show to give certain success to his Marian Street debut, it seems to have been a miscalculation. Probably audiences will find the next production, *The Shylock Heart*, more to their taste.

Further North, Anne Neume is clearly finding his way to the tastes of Newcastle audiences, with the last three productions at the Hunter Valley Theatre Company comfortable successes. Following *Red Fever*, a production of promise and integrity of *Flashes of the Western World* proved surprisingly popular with audiences. Jonathan Baggis' Christy and John Kirby as the Widow Quins were the backbone of a strong cast, and Bill Haycock's novel set was simply effective in providing atmosphere.

Haycock's design for the subsequent *Habeas Corpus* was even more striking, the light blue flats towering above a blue and white disquieting floor reduced the actors to puppet-like proportions and avoided any need for attempts at naturalistic acting. The actors flowed uncorrupted and Bennett's farce about sexuality, its stereotypes and disappointments, could be played for its most bizarre and poignant, with little lapsing into the middle-ground of nudge-nudge innuendo.

At the centre of the production was John Doyle's Dr Wickwood, beautifully timed, occasionally Claxton and colonist of middle-aged nostalgia and wishfulness. As the more stereotyped Mrs Wickwood, Lorne Crutchbank pushed her performance appropriately, but credibly, and assured this couple the rest of the cast were able to make the most of their more extreme roles.

Geoff Corbitt and Robert van Marckenberg in Marian Street's *Crossing Niagara*.





Good scripts predominate

THE SEAGULL WINGS

by Jeremy Ridgman

The Seagull by Anton Chekhov, translated by David Cieslowski, Queensland Theatre Company, M400 Theatre, Brisbane Qld, Opened July 17, 1998

Director: Alan Edwards, Designer: Graham Watson, Lighting: James Holmes, Stage Manager: Patrick Wicks, Usher: Kennedy

Cost: Maria, Marina Canning, Michalukto: James Parnes, Sarah, Ray, Edith, Rina: Graham Harvey, Jacob: Nicholas Corle, Vronskaya: Mark Allan, Nana: Ingrid Mason-Chen, Fokine: Marlene Burgeon, Dora: David Cieslowski, Arkadina: Jennifer Oates, Trigorin: Matthew O'Sullivan, Stormov: Lee Westcott, Mami: Matthew Leverage, Cost: Gaynor Worsley

(Photo: comedy)

Wings by Arthur Koppe, La Boite Theatre, Brisbane Qld, Opened July 24, 1998

Director: David Bell, Designer: Claire Williams, Cost: Emily Nelson, Designer: Sharon Ann, Elton: Suzanne Gwynne, Jan: Peter, Joe: O'Dwyer, Sarah: Katrina Dwyer, Linda: Yasminell, Bill: Chris Sappington, Mr. Brownstone: Ian Peters, Mrs. Tansome: Rachel Dwyer

(Photo: Arts)

The Seagull is Chekhov's problem play. Not easily dismissed as carrying the imperfections of an early work, it nevertheless lacks the rhythms and observation of the later masterpieces that permitted Stanislavsky the confidence to assert that "all those who try to 'act', to 'pretend' when taking part in Chekhov's plays are making a sad mistake." Moreover, one senses here Chekhov's need to get an actor off his chest: the opposition of life and art and the view of the desecrations implicit in the failure to differentiate between the two result in an uncharacteristic moral didacticism.

The moral focus lies in the spiritual annihilation of Nina and if director and actress can solve the problem of an

approach to this character, the production is on its way, else, the innocent abroad, is the key to our attitude to this household of artists, would-be artists and sham artists. Her return in the final act presents one of the most difficult scenes Chekhov wished on an actor and unfortunately Ingrid Mason-Chen makes the mistake of pre-empting the distraction and the artistic failure in the earlier stages of her performance. Nina's acting in Constantine's dramatic party piece (introduced by Chekhov as a send-up of Russian symbolism but still recognisable as a proto-naturalism) here becomes the object of comedy rather than a creditable rendering of embarrassing material. Likewise, the design for the first act, in its excessively tested sky, lake and foliage and its ragged actors, manifestly conveys precisely that artistic mysticism which Constantine, the supposed idealist, seeks to force upon nature.

Matthew O'Sullivan's Trigorin is out of a handful of performances that light on the subtleties of self-deception that permeate the play. In David Cieslowski's translation, the self-dugest in his Act Two confession is played down ("I've never loved myself") and in a host of beautifully understated intonations and gestures, such as the unconsciously casual "might come in handy" as he gets down a plagiarised term of phrase, O'Sullivan carefully dwells the fatal mixture of cynicism and romantic appeal.

David Cieslowski has provided the QTC (and, one hopes, future productions) with a lush and lively translation. The phrasing is idiomatic without being self-consciously over-loaded; Michalukto asks Marina why she "gets around" in black and Constantine objects to the "pobling little novel" that characterises the type of play he despises. The expressiveness of some of the similes has been boldly developed; the addition of stinkiness to Sorin's feeling of hanging around "like an old cigarette holder", for example. Cies-

lowski has also joined with other recent translators in restoring the gaze of the Orphee relationship between Arkadina and her son, by having Constantine reply to his mother's quote from *Hamlet* with the correct subsequent line: "The rank sweet of an executed bird" apparently proved too distasteful to earlier translators. Jennifer Clare homes in on the calculating opportunism of Arkadina, but she and Graham Harvey fail to capture the passion underlying this destructive relationship.

"If brain damage is terrifying to behold, it is also alluring," writes Arthur Koppe in his preface to *Wings*, and, indeed, his expressive "speculations" on the shock and aftermath of a stroke in a truly enthralling piece of writing. Like Louis Nowra's recent radio work, *The Song Room*, it is an attempt, influenced by Lurie's *The Man who a Shattered World*, to render tangible the experience of a traumatised and aphasic mind. Koppe, however, concentrates on developing the fragmented vision as a fantasy whose interwoven layers of sensory reality we are led through in the quest for a momentary moment, a particular experience, "wonderful, but awfully scary", in Amy's former career as an actress.

David Bell's sensitive and well modulated staging does little to convince that the play would not have been more effective had it remained, like *The Song Room*, an intricately composed stereophonic radio play. One is persuaded, however, by the palpable experience of Catherine Slater's superlative performance, her repose in mourning, the majesty of her expressive anguish. If the pre-set structure of *La Boite* can occasionally produce perfection, this is it.

An excellent production

UPSIDE DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

by Veronica Kelly

Upside Down at the Bottom of the World by David Allen.

QTC, Tangaroa Productions, Edward Street Theatre Brisbane Qld. Opened July 22, 1991.

Director, Robert Chalm, Designer, James Mathies, Lighting, Jamie Watson, Stage Manager, Caroline Marks.

Cast: Lawrence, Stephen Muddins, Ivorine, Jenny Jacobson, Valerie, Barbara Franklin, Jack Bryn Cox.

(Professional)

The starting point for *Upside Down at the Bottom of the World* is Lawrence's Kanguroo, a mixed piece of impressionistic tourist observation brewed up with Nietzschean psychodrama once hailed in some quarters as a Great Australian Novel. If so, *The Drivvy Song* is a great Aussie musical. The machinery has been QTC so tell us to expect a play about ideas and relationships, not an encounter with the spirit of place which is the novel's great strength.

Allen has selected out two of the novel's main strands, the first being the portrait of the artist and his self-formulation as a being detached from social demands. However, while the novel's Lovat is besieged on two sides to lend his pen and privilege to the competing ideologies of Diggers and socialists, the only Australian pressure upon the artist in the play is embodied in Jack Callcott, the proto-New Guardiean.

It is in the delineation of the Callcott couple that the play is thorough, and the Lawrencean derivation doesn't help. The Australian characters of Kanguroo tend to the pop-psychicist: a Jilly Cooper, given a semblance of social and psychological profundity through Lawrence's gift of mind if unshared generalisations about "human terror", "time-twilight" and such.

As played by Stephen Muddins, DHL is a gentle, kind traveller who hides his strengths and vulnerability under as much inconspicuous protective clothing as climate allows. He appears modelled more on the warmly attractive and generous Lawrence attested to by Prichard and Moby Skanner than on the cranny, vain in Lovat, with his daffy, pre-lapsarian philosophies of unity and sacramental national bloodbaths. The play thus presents the odd, warring spectacle of an author interacting with his own creations, who have become even flatter to their dramatic realizations. There

is an embarrassing Hoganesque conversation about the merits of Aussie beer, and the feeble homogeny is displayed for its alleged inherent comicality.

This dodgy area is however (showed) up by an excellent production, and especially by the casting of young actors throughout. This permits the notable caricatural elements of the Callcotts to just tell past one's bulimic detector, whereas older actors' readings of the same roles possibly would not. The youthful-looking Kevin Cox acquiesces better particularly well as the *Order* antagonist.

Upside Down's main dramatic fire is fanned from the novel's portrait of the Lawrence's colourfully combative marriage, with the rock and hen Callcott merge as its due background. Here again there has been a significant limitation. DHL is short of the original's characterist cerebral heat. "I am the master!" He loses every round to the Mahelapian Fricks, and upon demonstrations of her meretricious business, confidently mutters "She comprehends me." Frickish Lawrence quails before a casual severity which is unopposed even by the prospect of delivering an alien homogeny, and there are grim allusions to those gobblingly fast checks out in the Pacific Jerry Seidenman is warm as well as apologetic, and keeps the earth mother but humanized Lawrence survives as a actual bump, but by accepting the role of paternalist peasant awarded him by the amateur of free sexuality. His strength is in passivity.

What we appear to have then is a study of a Post figure, bent in Europe by malignant xenophobia, who flies to the Antipodes to seek a healing alienative version and there discovers that the place is actually inhabited, and by the same old pressures too. Whence we know that Lawrence undoubtedly forced himself as a prophet of sorts. Allen's DHL projects his inner life by avoidance of endorsement in any army. But, with the social context of the play reduced to recover importantly by variable barbarians, the victory of the sensitive free-souled Artist over ones and self-destructive society is easily achieved.

Allen's Lawrence is a courageous and vulnerable individualist, but he is let off too easily. The portrait of Terra Australis as a social entity is, for its part, obscured by projective distortions, for which Lawrence and Allen can also the responsibility between them.

Youthful, vigorous, light

AS YOU LIKE IT

By Michael Morley

As You Like It by William Shakespeare, First Theatre Company of SA, Playhouse, Adelaide SA, Opened July 13, 1991.

Director, Nick Knight, Michael Fuller, Designer, Richard Roberts, Lighting, Nigel Lavigne, Music, Graham Butler.

Cast: John Saunders, Tony Cassiano, James Lewis, Philip Owen, Susan Jones, Wendy Whigham, Ed Cole, Deborah Little, Peter Crowley, Vanessa Downing, Henry Sater, Michael Fisher.

(Professional)

As You Like It has never been high on my list of Shakespeare's plays. Its structure is convoluted, the contrast between the court and forest too easily arrived at, and most of the characters are sketched rather than fully-fledged human beings.

My negative reactions to the play, however, have little to do with Nick Knight's production, which is youthful, vigorous, light where it needs to be and very clearly spoken. The latter is particularly important, for, given the weaknesses and noted above, any successful production must seek to ride over them with attention to the rhythms and some of Shakespeare's verse. Knight had chosen to work with two casts. I did not see both but, to judge from others' remarks, the clarity of diction was just as much as the force in the other cast.

Given some of the misapprehensions Shakespeare offered by the Company in the past, that *As You Like It* was especially notable as high comedy light without being arch, the low series genuinely funny without playing off into obvious or comic caricatures. And the playing of the young cast managed to avoid the obvious excesses of unrelated physical activity or over-bounciness, high school spirit. The energy came not only from the performers themselves, but also from their understanding and delivery of the text.

The particular delights of the production were James Lewis's Touchstone, Debbie Little's Rosalind and Henry Sater's Jacques. Lewis's Touchstone was

a complete departure for this actor from the sort of role he has played in the past in the Company's productions. On this evidence he really is a marvellous clown, with a surprisingly subtle face and a remarkable ability to convey comical sense without resorting to the smug knowingness that so many actors fall back on when playing Shakespeare's clowns. His scenes with Suz Lyons' Audrey were delightful: her Audrey managed to suggest clumsiness, dizziness and stiffness at once. And the interchanges between the two characters made use of some deft sight and verbal play.

Debra Lisle's Rosalind was equally engaging in female and male attire. She avoided the pitfalls of obvious burlesques in her portrayal of Gloriana and nearly caught the ambiguity of the attraction between herself and Philip Quast's Orlando. Henry Sater's Jacques was not the archetypal soubite, brooding melancholy in his reading he was endowed with a rather humorous and brusque brand of neuroticism. His first entrance with his ironic encouragement to the singers of "More, More" struck a note which he maintained throughout the production, and which made this Jacques not the brooding, limp figure which he too often becomes.

Richard Bakera's design seemed a trifle too austere and basic, but certainly allowed the performers to discover the openness of the space, and Graham Dudley's music was entirely apposite and very well sung. If I have only singled out the three performers mentioned, it is not because the others suffered by comparison: in this case the production was an example of true ensemble playing and one could, without difficulty, cite particular moments in every actor's performance which deserved to be recorded. One of my favourites would have to be John Saunders' William, who, when asked whether William was his name, gazed at the audience in dumb incomprehension before beginning to hum tentatively a tune which was positively recognisable as "Happy Birthday To You". As he reached the "Happy birthday, dear —", he lay it up with recognition and delight, while the audience collapsed.

Without real panache

CYRANO

by Gus Worby

Cyrano (book by Randall Mark, Fred Hunter, Edna and Lynn, San Geron, Stage Company, the Space Adelaide, SA, opened July 29, 1988)
Director: Brian Debusan, Musical Director: Michael Morley, Set: Bruce McClelland, Cost: Sam Lottin, Stage Manager: Bruce McClelland.
Cast: Cyrano: Lyle Dayman, Roxanne: Judith Barry, Raguena: Alan Lovell, Christian: Selwyn Crockett, Luc: Ellen Freeman, Rene: Stuart McClelland.
(Professional)

"Panache!" — the last word, the essence of the dying Cyrano de Bergerac in Roxanne's play *Panache* — the very quality lacking in this production of *Cyrano* — the musical. Here was an event which strove to supply something of the slickness and spectacle of the big-time, whilst looking longingly over its shoulder at the modest opportunities and the apparently forbidden fruit of the rough theatre. The book lacks a tragic-comic element and convolution of plot, and the score lacks both irony and sophistication which would match the important baroque quality of the original. *Cyrano* appears to be a relationship with aspects in *Don Quixote* (*Man of La Mancha*), whilst adhering to a format and economy which suggests *The Fantasticks*.

This, I suspect, is not an impossible fusion, but in this production the attempt was confusing. The men here lay money and good humour, and especially in the vagaries of wordplay, riped scene and costume changes and often deft, nonpoetic, cheeky parody of musical conventions. Yet the confusion stemmed from the fact that the production appeared, on occasions, to parody itself. In those highly demanding duelling sequences when Lyle Dayman (Cyrano) and Selwyn Crockett (Christian) revolved so much in thrust and parry, the four remaining cast members were permitted to wield their rapers as though they were involved, variously, in the game of Hurling, or in removing restaurant tyres from uncooperative cars. It takes a long time to rehearse a play built around set-piece fights and songs, and short-cuts usually prove to be the long way home.

What of the play and its songs? *Cyrano* is but loosely related to Roxanne's play, yet owes much to it. It is built almost exclusively around the love triangle —

Cyrano-Roxanne-Christian — and by and large follows the formal elements of a situation in which the ill-favoured masterwardman wooes his love through the good looks of a shallow but brave "cousin". The counterpoint is provided in the Commedia-like, lower class affair between Raguena, the poetic penny cook and his skittish love Luc. Both men consider themselves unworthy of the love they bear, practicing victims of fate or class.

Roxanne is concerned with wit, but also with the far from humorous plight of all victims. Whereas the musical tends to rely heavily on the songs to reveal character complexity, the play, with its varied use of verse, thrives on ambiguity at many levels. This makes *Cyrano* a far more interesting character. He attempts with a determination bordering on the desperate, to silence ridicule by drawing attention to his deformity and then discharges those who respond to his self-mockery. He is a walking snarl, a perpetual contradiction in the terms of his day: a beanpole deers to love Roxanne, a creature with power of pen and sword. His quality is found in his image: in his hat a flamboyant plume, on his face a weapon-moon. This is a fantastic creature. Roxanne gives his character now an absurd, now a natural power which seems from, but transcends the pretence. *Cyrano* is, in a special sense, a lunatic. His fantasy has religious, sexual and political implications.

The musical version of *Cyrano* steps well short of this level of fantasy. It prefers a more benign madness — something which tends towards the silly and the slapstick, the soft-shoe shuffle to march-time and a heroine in hairily gown and seven-league boots. In this respect, at least, it fits the puppet-theatre instrument which director Debusan and the Festival Centre management suggested, with their tables and bar service. It harks back, in fact, to the days of potted musicals at Sydney's Mowbray Hotel, when Hagen Gordon and other stars reduced the stars, but met the slope, of well-known shows.

Cyrano was well sung by Judith Barry and Ellen Freeman, well spoken and pointed by Dayman and Crockett, well clothed by Alan Lovell and Stuart McClelland. But, without intimacy, the ability to stand and deliver in an old fashioned musical way, and above all without real panache, any company of actors would be hard put to defend an untried script and score in a crypt which some latter-day wit has dubbed The Space. Then again, as Roxanne was doubtless bound to mutter, "A rose is a rose is a rose", or "A rose by any other name won't still a rose".



The Australian corps of the Nightshift company, now based in Hobart, recently gave the first in its new series of play-readings. According to director James Sharps, the aim of the readings is to "provide a vehicle for dialogue, a point around which people may gravitate that is work-oriented. To this end, short, intensive rehearsal periods are being organised to present distinct theatrical experience as ideas rather than finished works."

Faulstich's *Pre Paradise Sorry* now was written in response to what Faulstich regarded as the narrowly optimistic formulations of the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* in the midst of murders, Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, as the focus of a complex structure of short scenes that reveal a world of brutal and deferred accountability and latent fascism.

There are fifteen "contrast," scenes in which two actors going up on a third (provides) against a homocentred, rapacious, agonist victim, etc., eight dialogues between Brady and Hindley, six statements from a narrator and several group incantations that stress the cannibalistic imagery of the Christian liturgy. These are woven into a structure that is too sophisticated for the banality of the content it's meant to carry.

Faulstich's premise that violence and perversion are intrinsically interesting has no more validity than the shock-horror tabloids and he fails to develop his major argument — the murders as apocalyptic-casting — in any interesting way. There are sufficient differences, in the writing, between the various levels of violence-in-reality that Faulstich serves to connect and the weakness is aggravated in a reading format which cannot compensate for the lack of theatrical effect.

Nightshift used six actors from the Salamanca Theatre-In-Education troupe and the cross-fertilisation between the material and styles of the two groups should prove interesting. Lack of rehearsal time may have contributed to the fact that on this occasion the TIF actors, with the exception of Richard Lawrence and Mary McLennan, seemed ill at ease with either the format or the material. There was a holding-back which translated into a certain awkwardness in the reading with not enough variation in tone and pace.

Overall though the production of the reading was very effective even if the anticipated dialogue with the audience failed to eventuate because of the unexpectedly large turn-up. Since the dialogue is an important part of the event Sharps will have to consider ways to resolve this problem in the future.

Language took over

THE ALCHEMIST

by Pamela Hyland

The Alchemist by Ben Jonson. Apperance Theatre. Rising Gallery, Hobart. Tas. Opened July 1981. (Reviews: Donna Large, Chris Harvey, (Hobart).)

One always has some apprehension about the language of plays written so long ago and, indeed, the first few speeches of *Alchemist* were difficult and not exactly comprehensible. But after a short time the patterns and rhythm of the language took over and the small but appreciative audience followed easily the tricks and twists of plots, ever deepening to pull the foolish or ambitious. Much of this understanding depended upon the internalised understanding of the players and their clear articulation and emphasis.

In this, the tricksters, Satele, the Alchemist, and Face, the Housekeeper — Captain Servant, set a clear, ringing pace. Christopher Thomas and Anthony Adcock had many changes of character and costume, but these were all managed with speed and confidence. Christopher was especially skilful and effective, thoroughly enjoying himself in the variety of roles he had to play, from high comedy to slapstick. Martin Pearce, as Dagger, was simple and glib, always looking on riper and plucked with the wonder of it all. Dragger, the Tobacco Man, was played as a cross between Urish Heap and Frank Spencer, but it did not quite succeed. Clara McDermott was not tedious enough to be so humble and looked more uncertain than anything else.

Tania Atwood, as Doll Common the colleague to the women, was delightful. She managed many accents well, mixed quickly and lightly and took some graceful falls. One of the funniest scenes was her mad scene, with Sir Epaphroditus Marenzio, very ably presented by Kit Paterson, who differed helplessly up and down with much flapping of hands and vocal exclamations.

The setting was sparsely and costumes

Sophisticated structure, banal content

PREPARADISE SORRY NOW

by Amanda Labrie

Pre Paradise Sorry Now by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Presented by Nightshift in Process House, Salamanca Place, Hobart. July 18. Director: James Sharps. Cast: Ian McIlroy, Richard Lawrence, Ian Watson, Mark Broadbent, Mary McLennan. (Hobart Play.)

effective. The painted screens suggesting the atmosphere were meticulously drawn, the real windows were boobyed, the alphabet's letters and bookers bubbled and popped some distance back.

The audience appreciated the music from the Consort. It set the initial tone and developed a significant tune for each character as he appeared at the door. This was not blatant but subtly involving.

The evening began a little clumsily, but the play took off in a splendidly easy manner.

Titillation and enunciation

BOLD TALES ANTIGONE

by Garrie Hutchinson

Bold Tails (the company) and adapted from screen by Peter Carey and Frank Moorhouse. Australian Play Festival Group, Frank Factory Melbourne. We opened July 1981.

Director: Peter King, Designer: Peter Corrygan, Production Manager: Margaret Martins, Cost: Miles Hughes, Book: Dennis Moore, Tim Corrigan, John Murray. (Professional)

Antigone, by Sophocles translated by Peter Agnew. Melbourne Theatre Company. Melbourne 2. We opened July 3, 1981.

Director: Peter Agnew, Designer: Mark Wages, Lighting: Warren James, Stage Manager: Susan Ryan, Production Company: The Theatre Group, Cost: Dennis Moore, Book: Miles Hughes, John Corrigan, John Murray, Book: Dennis Moore, Stage Manager: Susan Hughes, Designer: Peter King. (Professional)

The setting for what seems likely to be the last production inside the main painted walls of the Frank Factory could hardly have been more appropriate.

If the paint could talk:

"When you think that nearly every production since *Marcello* Melbourne has required a new paint job, you realise that it's not the walls with the cast, but the layers of paint."

Now, in its intimate and painful way, *Marcello* Melbourne is about to destroy one of the buildings that helped create its brief moment of maturity.

That graphic designer Peter Corrygan splashes the paint in blood red and another black paint over the walls like a poverty-struck Pollock with only two pots of paint. Then he takes a rifle and shoots holes in the windows, a message, perhaps, to conservatismists. Then he crosses piles of

broken bricks and rubble, preading the demolition of the theatre by a few months. And he acts the audience on an angle, off square, facing this gloomy vision of the future.

It's a scrupulous design for a battleground, for that is what it is. A second battleground.

The fight is between, or rather over, (male) homosexual experience, and especially that experienced by young boys and teachers and priests, presented as the products of different cultures. The materials are from stories by Frank Moorhouse (*The Evolutionary Secret*), Peter Carey (*A Schoobos*), Frank (*War Crises*) and from the group and director Peter King including a piece of "puppets and speakers".

Bold Tails begins with a voluptuous mixture of religion and lust, day and imagination, and a public school chapel in that is played so far over the top that it's difficult to tell whether the point of view is tongue in cheek, semi-critical or just an excuse for loud acting. I found it to be more ironic than naive, not having a hard, gilly, Catholic imagination.

The piece is entitled *Lord, What They Have Done To Him: A Public School Anthology*. Performed in the manner of a school play it does have the merit of rehearsing the point about boys' schools. It's a good argument for either the abolition of religion or single sex schools or both.

The second piece, Carey's *Schoobos*, Frank is somewhat observed here compared to an prose version, but does have some of the beauty of the story. It is mainly due to the extraordinary range of Dennis Moore, a much underrated actor, whose performance in this show ought to assure him rapid advancement. He manages as Turk Kenture, to look frightfully like a bullfighter. At the point on which the tale turns to the death of his dog, and its making to him from above because he'd reminded grown up pupils of their schoolboy indiscretions, it is highly appropriate. And spooky.

The third piece, using some innovative puppets, is a description of the seduction of a boy coming with his cousin on the wing of Grandma. This is done as a sort of American true romance, self core porn revelation from the old Dennis Moore, and the lauded Simon Hughes.

While they speak, the puppets move about on casters, operated from behind by actors. They are like one-armed white, has relief, sailors' dances, with the other arm that of the actor manipulating them. They are also equipped with incised frontiers.

This piece is again, in America this time,

something of an exercise in illusion, in impressing a torpid audience as if not conform, then enjoy, some sexual indignity via a humorous, populist piece of porn.

The last tale is the Moorhouse, and it's the major achievement of the show. It's about the relationship between a politician with a public life, and his lover, a boy with a private life, an erotic scene in the book, an erotic present on stage.

It has to be said that the complexity of the Moorhouse story isn't all there in the play. Its sexual detail, its tone. There's sufficient in the narrative, and the performance once again from Dennis Moore as the politician with Tim Corrigan as his lover, for it to be a confronting half hour.

There are all sorts of events raised: obsession, ownership, luxury, secrecy, submission, eroticism. But perhaps the outstanding image is one of gender confusion.

Towards the end of the piece, the politician brings around his son to be initiated by his lover as a birthday present, his 13th birthday. The boy is played by Jillian Murray, who is a woman and is the gentle, critical act of seduction, calculated to stimulate the audience, there is a race feeling of confusion for its homosexual members. We've turned on by a heterosexual couple playing a homosexual couple. I think that was the point.

It's ironic if *Bold Tails* closes the Frank Factory, because the Frank is just about the only place in Melbourne where it could be performed to a "general" audience. For all it's messiness and predilection for school and religion it's a brave and strong piece of work.

Compared to *Bold Tails*, *Antigone*, at Athenaeum 2, is neat and clean, and it still is a depressingly morbid play. It's presented as a new version for four actors by director Steve Agnew.

The acting is fine as far as it goes, students of the play can hear each word enunciated perfectly, in well modulated tones expressive of grief, anguish, love and the rest, the setting is functional, the costumes RSC look cloth, the music near Rancun.

Agnew's version, in trying to inject some dramatic poetry into the text, uses a whole range of biblical, Elizabethan turns of phrase, words, rhythms, interstices of phrases (poetry has to find occasional rhymes, alliteration, repetitions, similes) and deliberate lapses into prose (Shakespeare style). Unhappily while the language is clear, it also gallops along in a rhetorical *deus deus* fashion, rather than a muscular dramatic poetry.

Still, greater writers than Agnew have had a go at that and not done better.

Extremes of scale

EGBDF

ONE WOMAN SHOE

GOOD PERSON OF

SETZUAN

by Suzanne Spurrer

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour by Tom Stoppard
and Andre Previn. The Playhouse Theatre Company in
cooperation with The Victorian Arts Centre, Dallas
Brooks Hall, Melbourne. Opened July 13 1993.
Director: George Furdas, Musical Director: John
Haykin.
Cost: Alexander David Derman. Costume: Nick Funder.
Set: Justin O'Connor. In: Benjamin Grant, Grotto
Charles Thompson, Tessa Lindy Davis, Colleen
Lloyd Cunningham, and the members of the Victorian
College of Arts.
(Performances)

One Woman Shoe by Barry Dickson. Four Short Plays.
— The Arts, Martin Gaudet. The WETA Centre, Sturt
by 6.00pm. La Mamma Theatre Melbourne. V.
Opened July 1 1993.
Director: Peter Green, Stage Manager and Lights: Gail
Price.
Performer: Anne O'Shanessy.
(Performances)

The Good Person of Setzuan by Bertolt Brecht
translated by Eric Bentley. Melbourne Theatre Com-
pany. The Melbourne Conservatorium, Melbourne. V.
Opened July 4 1993.
Director: Bruce Myles. Designer: Richard Pelt.
Musical composition and direction: Nathan Grims.
Lighting Designer: James Lewis.
Cost: Wang, Robin Evans. The Three Gods: Gary
Brown, Marcus Edwards, Peter Cullen. Shen To: Sally
McKinnon. Mr Shen: Irene Tassanopoulos. (Brecht's 100
Men: Michael Ridge, Wale Biale, Middleton, Stephen
Wright, Tim Hughes, Beecher, Pollockman. Food
Inspector: Hodge. Sinner in Love: Francesc. Anna/Son:
Pascualinho, Grandfather: Anthony Haskin, Neri:
Sally Cahill, The Unemployed Man: Stephen Clark,
The Carpenter: Andrew Martin. Men in the Moon:
Bridgman, Yang Sun: Chris Brinkard, Mr Shen To:
David Rossouw and, Mr Yang, Anna Phoenix, The Old
Woman: Sally McKinnon.
(Performances)

It would be difficult to find three pro-
ductions more different than these in terms
of economies of scale — at La Mamma
before an audience of thirty, one performer
plays the characters, while at Dallas
Brooks Hall a full orchestra plus six actors
performed before an excess of 1,500 people.
At these extremes there was an inverse
ratio between the size of the production
and the depth of the material presented,
with the MTC production straddling the
middle ground.

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour is a
brilliant idea from a clever writer and a
conductive composer with theatrical
panache, but as it develops, it is not very
profound, provocative nor, for that
matter, well thought out. Nor is the music
particularly exciting.

On the face of it, it is an unplayable play,
or a millionaire's folly, because it requires a
full orchestra if it is to be staged on a suitable
auditorium. The actors are all locked into
position on costra at different levels
amongst the orchestra, accompanied on their
rally by odd bits of music, there is as
little connection between them phys-
ically as there is aurally. The actors'
chances of engaging with the audience over
these vast distances were minimal.
Actually, under George Furdas's
direction, the moments when this con-
nection was possible were achieved — as in
the moment when Charles Thompson, play-
ing the psychiatrist, talks his wife into under
his arm and goes off to play man orchestra
after he has just spent the previous ten
minutes trying to convince a patient that he
(the patient) hasn't got an orchestra.

The weakness of the play itself is the
tenuous relationship between the actors
and the orchestra (there is no reason why it
could not have been suggested by auditory
instrument). Even more important con-
siderations than those of production econ-
omies, are those of clarity, consistency,
metaphoric power and the political impli-
cations of the analogy which Stoppard and
Previn have drawn from the music
orchestra.

At first it seems to stand for dissonance
when the same are called upon for telling
the truth, they might as well really be mad
and believe they've got orchestras in their
heads. Given that the audience can see the
musician's orchestra, it appears to suggest
that the orchestra music stands for
dissonance (truth), or the ability to make and
hear the truth.

So far so good, until a second patient
enters the hospital prison who can't hear
the orchestra, but is a real dissonant and
describes the events which have led to his
imprisonment. At this point, 'orchestra'
comes to stand for social control and the
role of the state: everyone has a part to
play, and we must all play together. The
combination of Stoppard's verbal lechery
and political fickleness leads to very
muddy metaphors — if not reactionary
politics — when, in the *Officer* Part ending
we are expected to condone the madman
who could, like us, hear the orchestra
throughout.

At La Mamma, *One Woman Shoe* was
an evening of five short plays by Barry
Dickson which vary considerably in the
language and the deployment of comic
devices. Designer Peter Green has worked
extensively with Dickson's material, but the
performer, Anne O'Shanessy is a relative
newcomer. Individually the pieces were
enjoyable and together they constituted an
oddly instructional evening of solo comedy

under particular restrictions.

Dickson's writing proved overall to be
disciplined and funny, rarely relied on
cheap tricks and provided some strong
comic monologues. Comic writing for and
about women is a rare thing and Anne
O'Shanessy's performance was well ob-
served and beautifully timed. Peter Green's
direction was clear and well structured in
each individual piece, but it lacked an
overall shape and the transitions between
the pieces were awkward. A less naturalis-
tic approach to the direction and design
could have solved this without necessarily
sacrificing the character detail.

MTC are not known for their innovative
Brecht productions, rather they have
tended to centre on the particular qualities
of the lead actor's performance — Frank
Thring's *Gallies*, Joanna McCallum's
Grusha or Gloria Dawn's *Mother
Courage*. Having seen Sally Mackenzie's
performance as *Lulu* in *Mourning
Becomes Electric* and enjoyed the hard,
uncompromising quality in it, I thought
that of the earliest MTC batch she was the
only one who could make Shen To as
ferociously testimonial as Brecht intended.
But indeed, her performance as the good
woman whose poverty and humanity
would have ensured her downfall had she
not developed a tough, silver-age, the-
se-mama, businesswoman count-
ess was stunning and certainly saved the show. How-
ever, she was supported by a number of
other interesting performances; by
Douglas Hodge as the policeman and
pimp and Marie Redishaw as her landlady.

Bruce Myles' direction was stimulating
and gave the play a distinctive perform-
ance style and visual consistency which in
no way aped the Berliner Ensemble nor
traduced the politics. His interpretation of
the gods who descend to earth to seek out
one good person was a lively and provoca-
tive comment on contemporary political
public relations exercises, with its over-
tones of Life-In-It and Advance
Australia campaigns. Philip Adams would
have been proud of them.

The design, with its super-natural Coke can
and Marlboro box was crude and con-
fined in the main, but worked well when
the cigarette box flapped back to reveal the
gods looking down on us, the football
commentators or highway drunks on a
larger than life Parkman show. But was
the design almost Japanese general style
of performance with each character unroll-
ing a particular physical and vocal code,
that serviced the play and made Brecht's
profound and dense moral drama work to
well.

Psychiatry and the motor car

EXILES THE MADMAN AND THE NUN MIDDLE OF THE ROAD SHOW

by Steven Carter

Exiles by Alex Miller. Australian Newcomer Theatre, at Antipal, Melbourne. Via. Opened July 5, 1981
Director/designer: Jean-Pierre Mignoz. Stage Manager: Ann McQuinn
Cast: Black Cowboy: Tivert Moss, Daniel Gerard Thomas: Catherine, Elizabeth Ryan, Dorcas Kramm, De Rosset. With Gladys, Mrs Gower, Julia Joseph. (Professional)

The Madman And The Nun by Stanislas Wokosinski. Australian Newcomer Theatre, at Antipal, Melbourne. Via. Opened July 22, 1981

Director/designer: Nicholas Thomas. Music: Bruce Berghelin. Lighting Designer: Jean-Pierre Mignoz. Cost: Nicholas Thomas, Choreographer: Greg Carter, Stage Manager: Catherine Mundy and Stephen Myles. Cast: Gladys: Bruce Kramm, Gita, Neal McQuinn, Sever Anna, Sage Kramm, Daniel Gerard, Lynn Williams, Wilbury, Jay Mawaring, Alfred Joe Douglas. Production: Bruce Berghelin. (Professional)

The Middle Of The Road Show by Peter Finlay. Theatre Works, Phoenix Players, and The Special FX at Phoenix Theatre, Burswood State College. Melbourne. Via. Opened July 22, 1981
Director: Peter Finlay. Design: Peter Bannister. Lighting Designer: Debbie Salda. Stage Manager: Tony Nelson
Cast: Alison Duncanson, Rob McKernan, Anne Currie, Noel Mun, Liz Moore, Bruce Gaffey, Alan Milne, Alison Carr, Murray Holmes, Morris Daniels, Anne Rennie. (Drama)

ANT's two latest productions, *Exiles*, and *The Madman And The Nun*, should attract continuing audiences for Melbourne's newest and most innovative theatre company. To quote the programme: "Ant is committed to a high level of artistic endeavour and to an acknowledged fact that there exists a need and an opportunity for a renewal of vigour and relevance in theatre." The two new shows are the third and fourth Ant (Australian Nouveau Theatre) productions at the Antipal in South Melbourne.

Both *Exiles*, and *The Madman And The Nun*, are plays on the recent intellectual and cultural debate, psychiatry. In *Exiles* it is a cruel and degrading god, savaging and alienating the disenfranchised in society. Seconded, it leaves them only one thing: the act of revenge. *Exiles* is a new play by Melbourne playwright Alex Miller. It is a metaphor, lucid, and taut — a quality thankfully apparent in all but one, *For-*



Bruce Kramm, Jay Mawaring and Sage Kramm in *Ant's* *The Madman And The Nun*. Photo: Peter Wokosinski

lier of the Ant productions I have so far seen. Accept the new god and its attendant high priests, psychiatrists, and action with any valid consequence is effectively smothered in their writer of words and drugs.

A tight script and a tight production. Directed by Jean-Pierre Mignoz, the play is sparsely lit, set, costumed, and acted. The production has a pleasing completeness and symmetry. So too, the script, the play's several scenes are bound by the characters' common agendas and relationships, though varying moods and locations are accommodated by the simplicity of the set. The production's tightness is rewarding broken by an ending colourfully suggestive, vague enough not to be a crudely illustrative epilogue to all that preceded it. The final dance and the release of the ducks on the stage, visually and stylistically exploded the limits of the play's suggestions. The dancer's bearded groupings and aborted attempts at flight (incapable of doing anything but that on stage) was a beautiful and surprising end to the play.

Will Gladys (Dr Russell) as the burning and burning psychiatrist, and Julia Joseph (Mrs Gower) as his desperate patient, were both memorable, in deference to the restrained quality of all the acting, this was probably as their come was the comic and thematic highlight of the production. The only quibble was whether the Black Cowboy (Tivert Moss), symbol of rebellion and the rejection of counseling palliatives, was worth the following. His monologues lacked poetry and authority.

The Madman And The Nun showing at Antipal's new upstairs theatre, is directed by Nicholas Thomas and was written by Stanislas Wokosinski in 1925. The production is delightful and congenial. Rarely have I seen anything so innovative succeed so well.

The set was both gorgeous in detail, colour, texture and suggestion, and dramatically functional. The main acting area being enclosed in a video tape net, it was surprising how clear sightlines were. Sound and lighting were used sparingly. There occasionally seemed to be no immediately causal link between light and sound effects, and the text, the links, most often, were more elusive and suggestive than immediately and conventionally causal.

The actors did not draw the textual and thematic battlelines the audience, the actors often working counter to normal dramatic sense, had to listen carefully to the centre of their words and then draw the battlelines themselves. The effect was to make greater the drama to actually coordinate, as well as feel, the words. It was also highly humorous.

Theatre Works, an eastern suburbs community theatre group, have produced with the Phoenix Players and the Special FX, a new show entitled *The Middle Of The Road Show*. The Phoenix Players are an eastern suburbs amateur theatre group, and the Special FX a group of students from Burswood State College.

Written by Peter Finlay, a member of Theatre Works, *The Middle Of The Road Show* is a play in two halves — the first half is a history of the early years of Australia's motor car industry, performed by the Phoenix Players and members of Theatre Works, the second half is a movement piece on the modern motor car and its roadways, performed by the Special FX. There was an excellent ending to the first half, the stage overflowed in chaos, but the overall impression was that both halves were overly long preludes to a main feature that did not arrive. However, the Phoenix Players, working within this difficulty, gave the best performance I have seen from an amateur group.

WA



The Glass Menagerie
 Ed Crank and Marion Dainton

in the glamorous surroundings. Both Vic Hawkins and Lesley Wright give good comedy performances, and Vivienne Latham does a nice Joyce Grennell study as the flustered Miss Farnham.

J. B. Priestley has written better plays than *When We Are Married* and we can't help wondering why the Playhouse chose this particular one. True, it has amusing moments, a good period flourish (1918) and the characters on the married state, even though cliché, are neatly introduced. Much of the low comedy — a drunk philosopher, a port maid — is intrusive, slowing the movement of the play rather than providing the intended sustaining material.

The plot is contrived rather than ingenious. Three sets, successful, lower-middle-class couples disappear on their Silver Wedding day (but they aren't legally married). How will the hen-pecked husband react? How the bullied wife? How the disgruntled cousin help? How the young choir-master faced with the sack? There are five individual examples of The Wozan Turning, and of course three marriages are given a severe shakeup, before settling down again to embark on the next contrived yarn.

Vivian Gray and Faith Clayton as the two "hot" women give performances of charm and understatement. Jean Sydney, larger than life, has a whole of a turn with Miss Northrop, the monstrous char, but Horne as the port maid is almost incomprehensible with a bad north country accent.

Phil Withersham is particularly good as the pompous and self-satisfied Albert Parker and Marion Ogden is immediately likable as the most human of the husbands, whilst Frank Johnson does a very nice job of metamorphosing from bespeckled to material husband.

The comparatively new Actors Company has at present neither a permanent home nor an established body of players, but it is definitely carving a place on the Perth theatrical map. The venue for the present production is the Dolphin on the UWA campus.

Director, Hal Duane, has given Terence Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*

a totally new interpretation, by the simple device of having Liz Casadei playing the dominating mother Amanda not as a faded Southern Belle, but as a ragging, desperate little suburbanist Mrs. Kravoska, self-control obsessions make it somehow easier to believe in the neurotic children. Laura, the cripple, living in a world of her own, and Tom the embittered son, seeking escape at the moment every night, bored and threatened in a hopeless job, waiting for the World War to break out which will bring "adventure for the masses".

The production is patchy, with minor awkwardness. Why, for example, is there no attempt to play Laura's worn-out mother, despite frequent reference to her? Why is there a discrepancy between the realistic furnishings — even to the point of having an ancient typewriter in working condition — and elaborate moving of table-setting, folding of cloth, etc? Minor inconsistencies of attempts at "artistic" formating other way.

On the other hand there are good performances from the cast of young actors, notably Paul English, who is clearly emerging as the most impressive new talent on the Perth scene. He brings a natural ease to the part of Tom, knows the effectiveness of gestures, and in his quietness with Amanda manages to be simultaneously funny, vulnerable and pitiable.

Anne Spencer makes a delightfully appealing Laura — girly, pretty, introverted and almost colourless, but in the scene with the gentleman caller clearly establishes the lively and joyful creature she might have become in happier circumstances.

It is very early Tennessee Williams before he went self-consciously grotesque and exotic. It has a humour and delicacy of touch that tends to get lost in the later plays, which makes this a particularly welcome revival.

The Alien by West Australian playwright Joan Archibald probably suffered a little from amateur production. Presented by the Darlinghurst Theatre Company in a giant auditorium of new performers at the Hale-in-the-Wall, it was sufficiently well developed to introduce the play to wider audiences, but failed on some of the subtle nuances.

Set in wartime Western Australia, in the bush, it explores the three interwoven themes of xenophobia, petty tyranny and personality change under stress.

Jackie and Col are "mates", but they are also members of the Volunteer Defence Corps (the cosy Dad's Army school here), who are frustrated at being far removed from the real action of war. Jackie is being "corrupted" by Col (his superior officer) for harbouring an unpopular neighbour at German secretary A's time out develop, and into the mode of a strange "hello" from a nearby timber camp, requiring a signature on a travel permit. Col, who has already shown an inflexible attitude to petty rules, refuses his help. An already tense situation is aggravated by mutual suspicions and misunderstandings, until a breaking point is reached and tragedy results.

The play's structure is unusual, the first half seems long-winded and monotonous, though in retrospect it is justified by the need to establish character and ambience. The second half, much of it taken up with colourful and dramatic monologues, seems too much in contrast. One feels a more inventive production might have overcome the challenge of integrating these disparate elements successfully.

Most impressive of the actors was Mike Joines as Hendrik Melter, the Alien of the title — who brought considerable force to the monologues which largely consisted the second act.

The play makes a pertinent comment about xenophobia and failures in communication. It is a study of the origins of conflict — war in miniature — and in setting (40 years back in history) makes its message for today all the clearer.

THEATRE

guide

**A C T
AMU ARTS CENTRE (494767/
493278)**

Accidental Death of an Anarchist by
Dario Fo, dancer, rebel of the Italian
theatre, director, Brent McGregor for
Fortune Theatre.

Sept 12, 15-19, 22-28
CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE
Canberra Theatre (437800). Not Now
Darling.

The smash-hit comedy with Leslie
Phillips and Andrew Sachs. Presented
by Interstar.
Sept 7-12

Playhouse (495455): *I Dug It To Be In*
Pickens by Neil Simon.

The Ensemble Theatre's successful
production presented by Greg
Hocking.
Sept 8-26

**REID HOUSE THEATRE
WORKSHOP (470784)**

Ham, a group devised show by *Jigsaw*
for pre-schools, director, Graeme
Brown. Throughout Sept.

THEATRE THREE (474222)

Gypsy, a Lavants-Styke-Sondheim
collaboration. A Tempo production,
director, Ian Howard, musical
director, Ross Ianini. Sept 2-5

Bedroom Farce by Alan Ayckbourn.
Producer, Pamela Rosenberg for
Canberra Repertory.
Sept 15-Oct 10.

For arrivals contact Janet Hawley on
49 4769.

NSW**ARTS COUNCIL OF NSW (3575811)**

Adult Tours: Travelling North by
David Williamson. A Queensland
Theatre Company production. Some
say Williamson's best play — about
love in old age and city/country
differences.

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (4254677)

The Elephant Man by Bernard
Pomeroy, director, Haydn Gordon,
designer, Shaun Gurlon.

Internationally successful drama of
hideously deformed John Merrick and
his acceptance in Victorian society.
Throughout September.

**FRANK STRAIN'S BULL 'N BUSH
THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4827)**

Hampstead to Hollywood, director,
Frank Strain, musical director, Julie
Symonds. Throughout Sept.

**HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE
(212 3411)**

Evita by Andrew Lloyd Webber and
Tim Rice, director, Harold Pinter, with
Karen D'Nelli, Peter Carroll, John
O'May and Tony Alvarez.

One of the most successful musicals
ever. The new Australian *Evita* takes
over from Patti LaPore.
Throughout Sept.

**HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE
COMPANY, Newcastle
(4947262/755)**

I Am Work (working title) by John
D'Onofre, director, Anne Naama,
music, Allen McFadden; with entire
HVTC company and Vic Rooney.

New play about the life of Essington
Lewis and the beginning of BHP in
Newcastle.
Sept 5-25.

**KIRRIKILLI PUB THEATRE
(82 1415)**

The Private Eye Show by Perry
Gurton and Paul Chubb, with Zoe
Sedram. Throughout Sept.

**MARIAN STREET THEATRE
(444 3148)**

The Shifting Heart by Richard
Beynon, director, John Krummel, with
Tom Farley, Phillip Baker, Syd
Haylen, Joanna Lockwood.

One of the first of the new Aus
dramas, but rarely revived, unlike *The*
Doll and *One Day of the Year*.
Starts Sept 4.

MARIONETTE THEATRE (35546)

Drama Theatre SDH: Smiles Away,
director, Richard Brodshaw. School
holiday production. To Sept 12.

Stables Theatre: 303617. Magalomania
by Geoff Kelso.
Adult comic puppet show with Geoff
Kelso.

Starts Sept 5.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (4774542)

Farolito Don Privates, director, Peggy
Mortimer, with Ron Fraser.
Throughout Sept.

NEW THEATRE (5183453)

Do The Wotaby by Nick Enright,
director, Frank Barnes.
Nick Enright's very successful
documentary musical on the
depression years in SA.
Starts early Sept.

**NIMROO THEATRE (8965003)**

Upstairs: Cloud Nine by Caryl
Churchill, director, Aubrey Mallon,
with Cathy Downes, Michele Fawdon,
Barry Otto, Debra Rubenstein, Anna
Volakis and John Walton.
Strong British comedy about sex roles
and relationships between this
generation and the Victorians.
To Sept 13.

Downstairs: Pissed! by Alison Lyssa,
director, Chris Johnson. Allegorical
feminist play about social stereotypes
and lesbian custody.

**NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF
(357 1200)**

Theodore for primary schools and *The*
Unheard World Of Jasper Lawson for
secondary schools, directors, Ian
Walton and Nola Colafax.
Throughout Sept.

**PHILLIP STREET THEATRE
(232 8370)**

The Did Woman Who Lived In A
Show, A children's performance. Until
Sept 13.

Q THEATRE (347) 215735

Buried Child by Sam Shephard,
director, Richard Brooks. Starts
Penrith Sept 4.

STUDIO SYDNEY (771 3333)

Wayide Chapel. New production in
repertoire.

REGENT THEATRE (284 7888)

The Lips Minerva Show. Sept 22, 23,
24.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (442 0835)

Nathanias Persoff as *Sholem*
Alachem. Starts Sept 5.

**SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
(358 4368)**

Drama Theatre SDH 20586. Car On A
Hot Tin Roof by Tennessee Williams,
director, Richard Wherrett, designer,
Ian Robinson, with Wendy Hughes,
John Hargreaves and Ron Hadenock.

Typically feisty Tennessee Williams
drama, with star cast.
Starts Sept 22.

For arrivals contact Carole Long on
357 1200/809 2010.

OLD**HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE
(221 2777)**

The Dresser by Ronald Harwood,
director Rodney Fisher, with Warren
Mitchell and Gordon Chater.

Superb performances from Mitchell
and Chater in the popular drama of
back-stage WW2 rep theatre and its
characters.
Sept 1-19.

Not Now Darling. With Leslie Phillips
and Andrew Sachs.

British sex comedy with imported
British star.

Starts Sept 21.

LA BOUTE THEATRE (38 1822)

The Enemy written by Graunya
Morwed, director Malcolm Blacklock.
To Sept 15.

No Room For Dreamers by George
Hutchinson, director, Bruce Parr.
Entertaining comedy about 19th

century socialist and sexual reformer, Chudley, with music.
Starts Sept 18.

DUNESLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 2861)

SOLO Theatre: I Sent A Letter To My Love by Bernice Raubens, director, Kevin Palmer, designer, James Ridewood; with Graham Maclean. Beautifully crafted play set in Wales about the unrequited search for love of a middle-aged spinster and her crippled bachelor brother.
To Sept 5.

Albert Park: As You Like It by William Shakespeare, director, John Tasker, designer, James Ridewood. QTC's annual outdoor production for the Marana Festival.
Starts Sept 28.

TH THEATRE COMPANY 362 8133

Schönell Theatre: Staircase by Johnny Rush and Malcolm Cork, director Sean Moe, designer, David Bell.

Company devised rock musical.
To Sept 5.

For advice contact Jeremy Ridgman on 277 2519.

SA

THE ACTING COMPANY (274 0261)

Theatre 82: Macbeth by William Shakespeare, director Jim Vile, designer, Luke Cutler, with Nick Gill and Sue Reid. Sept 8-26, School Matinee 5-7. 25.

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST ((51 0121)

Festival Centre: A Lesson From Aloes by Athol Fugard; with Olive Bodill, Anthony Wheeler and Phillip Henton. A fine three-hander drama — focusing on the racial problems in the playwright's home in South Africa. Set in a cheap house in the white suburb of Port Elizabeth in 1963.
Sept 1-11.

THE STAGE COMPANY (223 8283)

Festival Centre: King Lear by William Shakespeare, director, Brian Debnam; with Wayne Bell, Deborah Little, John Heywood, David Hursthouse, Peter Crossley and Robin Harrison. Shakespeare's greatest tragedy about human frailty and pride.
Sept 21-Oct 10, school matinee 23, 30 Sept and 7 Oct. Space Theatre: The Christian Brothers by Ron Blair, director, Brian Debnam, with John Noble.

Blair's brilliant single-hander comedy-tragedy about Christian Brothers' school.
Sept 1-8.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY

(51 5151)

Playhouse: The Ravenger's Tragedy by Cyril Tournemir, director, Richard Cottrell; designer, Richard Roberts, with Geoffrey Rush, Daniels Olsen, Kevin Miles, Simon Burke, Philip Ouse, Stuart McGreevy, Marilyn Allen and Wendy Sirehlowy.

One of the earliest and greatest Jacobean tragedies, its poetic vision places Tourneur after only Shakespeare and Webster. The play is an entangled web of lust, incest, fratricide, rape, adultery, mutual suspicion, hate and bloodshed.
Sept 18-Oct 10.



TROUPE (271 7552)

Antid and Cruelty: An examination of the philosophies and theatre theories of the French poet and dramatist Antonin Artaud through the presentation of two works: Oedipus at Colonus by Richard Morphet, director, Greg Carter, and **To Have Done With The Judgement Of God** by Antonin Artaud; director, Jean-Pierre Mignon, with Julie Forsyth, Bruce Kellor and Gary Samolina. Sept 3-26.

WOMEN'S THEATRE PROJECT — NIMROD

Troupe Theatre Upstairs 271 7552: Anonymous Sometimes by Gillian Jones and Elizabeth Drake. Sept 15-Oct 3. For advice contact Edin Reil on 267 5586.

TAS

ILLUSION CIRCUS THEATRE COMPANY (83 5178)

Forseplay and Afterglow — A night of three plays: The Murmur by Sandy McCutcheon; director, Aileen McCutcheon. **Store At Room** Temperance by Susana Trotter, director, Michael Matos. **F and A** by

Sandy McCutcheon, director, Sandy McCutcheon. Sept 19-Oct 3.

POLYGON THEATRE (34 8818)

Sausage by Edward Albee, director, Don Gray, with Hazel Algar, Alan Harvey and Noreen La Motte. A bored couple discuss their life as they sit on a beach, there is clearly no genuine connection between them. Touring Tasmania, including King and Flanders Islands. Ring theatre for details.

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY (23 5258)

Rehearsals for King Lear by William Shakespeare, director, Richard Davy, with entire company plus additional actors. Tour starts Sept 29 in Devonport.

For advice contact Ely Kamal on (02) 23 1818.

VIC

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE (886 3253)

Artelli Theatre, Upstairs: The Jack and Jill Story, written and directed by Paul Aden, with Carmelina di Cogliastro. To Sept 13. **Marmegains Top**, theatre of dance and images, director, Jim Hughes. Sept 24-Oct 4.

Downstairs: You're a Good Man Charlie Brown, school holiday performances Mon-Sat 5.30pm, plus **Holiday Workshops** in basic drama techniques for children. To Sept 9. **To Have Done With The Judgement of God** by Antonin Artaud; director, Jean-Pierre Mignon, with Bruce Kellor, Julie Forsyth and Jean-Pierre Mignon. Performed in French. Starts Sept 17.

ALEXANDER THEATRE (3343 3828)

A Lesson From Aloes by Athol Fugard. Presented by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

Fugard's latest play about racial problems in South Africa, starring Olive Bodill and Anthony Wheeler. Sept 22-Oct 3.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7133)

Bedbug Collaboration by John Bley, director, Richard Morphet. Starts Sept 2 for three weeks.

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (528 4355)

The Playbox Theatre: Same Time Next Year, director, Don Mackay, with Peter Adams and Kirsty Child. Amusing two-hander comedy about an annual affair.
From Sept 23.

BANANA LOUNGE COMEDY ROOM (418 2888)

A succession of the best of Melbourne's underground comedy. Late shows, Fri and Sat

COMEDY CAFE BYO RESTAURANT (418 2888)

Carroll Knowledge written and presented by Peter Moon, Ian McFadyen and Eddy Zinberg. Sept 17-Oct

COMEDY THEATRE (862 3333)

Chicago, a woodville musical based on the play by Muriel Dales Watkins. Written by Bob Fosse and Fred Ebb, musical arrangement by John Kander; director, Richard Wherrett, with Nancy Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terry Donovan, George Spornale. Smash-hit success musical about corruption and the media in the thirties.

CROSSWINDS COMMUNITY THEATRE (057 623388)

Stronger Than Superman by Roy Kiti; director, Mick Carter. Performed by Crosswinds in conjunction with The Bouvier St Tie Team. Available for bookings. Sept 28-Oct 3.

FOUR'S COMPANY COMMUNITY THEATRE (053/31 1785)

The Transition Programme by Lloyd Sutton and Four's Company. Throughout Sept.

LA MAMA (347 9088)

The Tailor written and presented by James Claydon. To Sept 13.

A Script of Rosemary and a Touch of Ether written and directed by Annla Dunlop.

Going To Carabance? written and directed by Jay Williams. Three plays by Rusden Students. Sept 16-26.

La Mama's Playwright in Residence. Piece by Colin Ryan; director, Robert Chuter. Starts Sept 23.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (418 8228)

Downstairs: Background Snaps; director, Terry O'Connell, with Mick Conway. Throughout Sept. Upstairs: shows changing weekly.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (834 4000)

Athenaeum Theatre, The London Cupid/Kix by Edward Ravenscroft; director, Simon Chilvers; designer, Allan Lees.

A rollicking Restoration farce first produced in 1682 and revived annually for nearly a century.

Throughout Sept. Russell Street Theatre: The Suicide by Nikolai Erdman; director, Judith

Alexander; designer, Paul Kethner, with Graeme Blundell.

Newly revised Russian comedy of the thirties about pressure groups trying to use a man's suicide note as propaganda.

To Sept 28.

Athenaeum 2: Antigone by Sophocles; director, Steve Agnew; designer, Mari Wagner. Throughout Sept.

MILL THEATRE COMPANY (053/323318)

M/V Nights every Thursday evening, the Mill is open for community workshops. Mill Club for children, Sat mornings. Throughout Sept.

MUSHROOM TROUPE (378 7384)

Savage Love, the last rock 'n' roll show, with Patsy Bandrups, Alison Richards and Neil Giles. Throughout Sept. Late Show at the Universal Theatre: Physical Strength, devised, directed and performed by Patsy Bandrups. To Sept 5, 11pm.



PLAYBOX (63 4888)

Downstairs: True West by Sam Shepard; director Rex Crenphorn; designer, Eamon D'Arcy.

Australian premier of Shepard's latest bizarre work about the confrontation of two brothers, which represents the true West?

To Sept 6.

Upstairs: The Golden Goldenbings and Interrogation of Angel. Two one-act plays by Barry Dickson; director William Gluts; designer, Sandra Mellock.

Delicious, irreverent expose of family life and a journey of self-discovery. To Sept 13.

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (418 3411)

I Ought To Be in Pictures by Neil Simon; director, Hayes Gordon. The Ensemble Theatre production. To Sept 5.

Squirts a political revue by Barry McKay, David Williamson, Steven

Sewell, Patrick Cook, Tim Robertson, David Allen and Steve Vizard, with Max Gillies.

Looks at the games played in the world of power politics in general and the Liberal Party in particular. From Sept 9.

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE (370 7034)

Touring Western Suburbs: Xerophobia, written and devised by West Community Theatre in collaboration with Debonry-Park Housing Estate.

A Rock Musical that presents a picture of today's Australia, urban, multi-cultural and diverse.

Throughout Sept. Just a Simple Bloke, a Touring Club Show with Phil Summer, Ian Shelves and Richard Zatorski. Available Sept. For entries contact Connie Kramer on 861 3448.

WA DOLPHIN THEATRE

University Dramatic Society presents Our Town by Thornton Wilder. Sept 8-19.

HAYMAN THEATRE (335 5444)

WAIT: Western Australia Theatre Company presents State of Siege by Albert Camus; director, Phil Thompson.

Sept 30-Oct 10.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (321 3298)

The Dresser by Ronald Harwood; director, Rodney Fisher, with Warren Mitchell and Gordon Chater. Superb performances from Mitchell and Chater in this popular drama of backstage WW2 rep theatre and its characters.

Sept 23-Oct 10.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2403)

Summer Of The Seventeenth Doll by Ray Lawler; director, Edgar Metcalf. The tale of two cane cutters and their long standing romance with two barmaids.

Sept 10-Oct 3.

PLAYHOUSE (325 3500)

National Theatre Company's Slightly Feasting by Alan Ayckbourn; director, Edgar Metcalf.

Ayckbourn's latest extremely funny look at middle-class mores. He has written four different outcomes, permutations depending on on-stage of a coin.

Sept 10-Oct 21.

For entries contact Margaret Schwan on 347 1378.



THE
QUEENSLAND
BALLET

PRESENTS
WORLD PREMIERE OF HAROLD COLLINS'
FULL LENGTH BALLET

Rituals

SGIO Theatre 10—19 September 1981.

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© WARANA Festival direction

AB STRIKE

The Australian Ballet's principals would have all been devoted to solists in 1981, had it not been for a protest strike by the dancers in July. The change of classification was proposed by the company's administrator Peter Bausch to get around the Equity ruling which permits no more than four performances a week from principals in three-act ballets. There are no such restrictions on solists.

Last year Mr Bausch attempted to get the Arbitration Commission to vary the principals' award, but failed. His argument is that a principal may be dancing a "minor role" but still have a contract worth six or her weekly quota of four. He said that the company was receiving complaints from audiences that they weren't seeing the company's principals. "This is the reason".

The answer to that is as simple as it must be: unpalatable to Mr Bausch's cost-cutting instincts. Get more principals. The Australian Ballet is always in need of more soloist dancers to share and develop the leading roles as well as setting a standard for the younger dancers. This would seem to be the ideal opportunity to take that step through a combination of promotion and importation.

SDC — ANOTHER OVERSEAS TOUR

The Sydney Dance Company's success in New York last May has brought it engagements in London at the Sadler's Wells Theatre and at the Hongkong Festival. Unlike the New York season in which the Sydney Dance Company presented itself with the help of the Australia Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs, these two organisations involved have offered to cover costs. The SDC's artistic director, Graeme Murphy, thinks it may be the first Australian performing arts tour to be totally subsidised from overseas.

Sydney Dance Company, Director Graeme Murphy

BAUSCH TO ADELAIDE

One of the world's most exciting and idiosyncratic choreographers, Pina Bausch, looks like being a star attraction of next year's Adelaide Festival. From her base in the West German industrial town of Wuppertal, she has started Europe with her extraordinary range of dance theatre productions. Her many varied works include a *Ray of Spring*, which is danced in a deep layer of earth.



Pina Bausch



DANNY HOME TO WED

Danilo Radegovic and Chino Kraemeras came home to be married on July 25 in Melbourne. They are both doing extremely well with American Ballet Theatre, and have returned to their New York apartment alongside Central Park to begin work for the 1981-82 season.

Danny — he'd never been anything other than adoring Australian audiences — was promoted to principal at the start of the ABT's season in New York. His name appears in the program alongside such luminaries as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Natalia Makarova, Fernando Bujones, Sidney Kirkland and Cynthia Gregory. Chino has been dancing solo roles, including the title role in *La Sonnambula* opposite Baryshnikov.

INTERNATIONAL DANCE COURSE

An international dance course for professional choreographers and composers along the lines of the famous Gallegher choreographic summer school in England will be held in Auckland in January.

It will be directed by Robert Cohen, Artistic Director of the London Contemporary Dance Company and its school. The course is fully residential and free of charge, including air fares, to those few lucky enough to be accepted.

The main idea of the course is to get composers and choreographers working together. Three to four weeks from January 17 to 31 are intended to allow a period of intense creative activity in either classical or modern dance.

Formally, applications closed on August 31. But anyone who is qualified and wasn't aware of the course might contact the organisers to see if a late application is possible by writing to The Secretary, Committee for the International Dance Course for Choreographers and Composers, PO Box 302, North Sydney, NSW 2060.

Contributing Editor
Jill Sykes

DANCE

INFO

ADT - Why we're different

Wildstars
choreographer and
ADT Artistic Director
JONATHAN
TAYLOR talks to
BILL SHOUBRIDGE.

If there is one thing that continually nettles and bemuses Jonathon Taylor, Artistic Director of the Australian Dance Theatre, it's the fact that people still insist on lumping his company and the Sydney Dance Company together, almost as if they were two branches of the same company.

"I don't know why it is," he said in an interview recently. "perhaps it's because we both started out at around the same time, circa 1977."

"But even there, there are differences. When Graeme (Murphy) took over the SDC it already had a repertoire to perform, but when I started up this company there was nothing. The 'old' ADT, under the aegis of Elizabeth Dalman, was terminated in late 1975. I began getting a company and a schedule together in late 1976 so there was a span of a year with nothing, absolutely nothing.

"The only other reason I can imagine why people would still class us together is the fact that we operate under the generic name of a 'modern dance' company and people still can't differentiate between various strands within that term. The fact is, the ADT is different from the SDC and yet the two companies are complementary. For one thing the SDC operate

basically in Sydney while we operate Adelaide/Melbourne and everybody knows the difference between Sydney and Melbourne.

"For another thing we have a different set up. Whether for reasons of design or circumstance, the SDC as it is today is more a single choreographer's company, built around the works and style of Graeme Murphy. We, on the other hand, get works from as many of our own dancers as possible.

Five of them at the moment - and therefore call ourselves basically a dancers' company. The Australian Ballet is best described as a business, but that's another story."

But just how did this distinction come about, was it intentional or accidental?

"Well," says Taylor, "when we first started, people had a certain expectation and a certain standard in mind. Since there was nothing of the 'old' ADT repertoire that we could have performed (or would have wanted to) we had to really start chasing works to build up a repertoire. I met various works that I had created for the Ballet Rambert as did Co-Artistic Director, Joe Scoglio. We asked a couple of close choreographer friends from overseas, Norman Motrice and Cliff Keamer, to create new works for us and all that meant we could have a stable of things to show the public.

"Almost immediately we then started the series of Choreographers' Workshops. These were started in order to give fledgling talents within our own company, and various other 'retired' Australian choreographers a chance of creating with well trained

— Nathan Taylor



and professional dancers. It was all rather a minimal thing, there was very little money to spend on sets and costumes and so on, so it all had to be ideas and content, using the dancers only. Since then we have gone on to the stage where we have taken some of those works into the main repertoire. Margaret Wilson, for example, entered into the scheme very early on and one of her works that we're bringing to Sydney, *Paraphrase* - came out of that workshop approach. Since it is now in the repertoire, I might point out, she has been paid a top fee for it, as if it was conceived originally for the main company.

"Later on this year in Adelaide, we will be presenting a full length work that is in effect a collaboration of three of our resident choreographer dancers, Julia Blake, Joe Scoglio and Norman Parker's *Transfigured Night*.



DANCE

John Salisbury. This, as far as I know is the first time anywhere in the world where such a concept has been tried.

"My own work, *Whiskers*, which will be our main work in Sydney and which had such an enthusiastic reception in Edinburgh, was in a way a watershed for this company. I put us out on a limb so to speak. We now rely almost entirely on works generated from within our own collective ranks. I would, however, like very much for a top overseas choreographer like Jim Kylean, or Glen Tetley, or William Forsythe to come out here and create a work for us. Not so much for the final product, that, the audience would see as for the process that would go on between them and our dancers. It would be a great chance for us today to ourselves. There is a good-to-great choreographer, let's see what his subject matter is and how he tackles it, are we in tune with what we are doing and what is our standard of performance going out at?" It is this that we see as just as important as a final product.

"Like Graeme and the SDC, we don't want a stable of bodies that just go out on a stage and 'do' steps. We want thinking dancers, dancers who say 'what am I dancing, how can it be achieved with more effect, is what I am doing projecting out into the auditorium?' and so on."

Choreographer Graeme Stewart



All of which sounds very good for the dancers, but what about the audience? How do they react to the company? What is their opinion of its style and standard?

Taylor answers this, in a way, with the reaction of audiences and critics at the last Edinburgh Festival.

"Genuine audiences and critics have, hitherto, had any idea of Australian dances from the performances of the Australian Ballet, and that standard has fluctuated alarmingly. This was one of the reasons why we found it hard in the early days of asking choreographers to work with us. They all more or less said 'Australian Dance Theatre, who are they?' Never heard of them' — and that would be that. Choreographers, especially successful ones, only want to work with companies whose reputations they know. The fact that the ADT is only four years old at the moment has also made them wary.

"Now when we went to Edinburgh, the critics and commentators reviewed us on an identical level as they would with the established companies; they already knew, there was no condescension, no patronisation and we came out of that comparison extremely well. Just as with the recent performances of the SDC in New York, they tried to categorise us, but failed. We may have done one work that 'reminded' them of Ballet Rambert, but then we did one *Alan Jones* or *William*.



that was more like say, London Contemporary Dance Theatre and there were others that didn't fit any definition. *Whiskers* especially non-plussed them because no other company in Europe would have ever dared to do something like that; we were a completely fresh and unique product.

"One critic, John Percival of the *London Times*, was especially impressed with the energy and power of the company, he couldn't get over it. He said 'They're so big, and broad and energetic', and for them that was true. English dancers are quite technically perfect, but also rather polite and reserved in performance whereas our lot came onto the stage as if it were a Roman amphitheatre and they were there to break it up. It was that dynamic strength that surprised and amazed them as much as anything else.

"It is that which also appeals to an Australian audience and, surprisingly in some ways, so is our choice of material. We recently handed out a questionnaire after one of our performances asking audiences such things as what works they preferred, what sort of music did they like etc. and the majority of the answers stressed the 'modernism' of the company as the favourite aspect; they liked modern, 'serious' music or electronic scores, for example as against 'classical' music — and that doesn't necessarily mean rock music!"

Following this discovery, what direction does Taylor encourage the company taking from now on especially in the work of its choreographers?

"There's never been a distinct line on that," answers Taylor. "I never direct any choreographer's work while he or she is creating it. I had that done to me, but essentially I think that is an invasion I could see to a creator. 'Look, if you did a bit this or like that it would be better', but then I am taking over and it ceases to be their work. If there are faults in a work, sooner or later the choreographer will see them and will work to correct them, but it has to come from them because that is the only way they will ever grow."

AUSTRALIAN
DANCE THEATRE

WILDSTARS

BY MICHEL THERIFF & JONATHAN TAYLOR



"WILDSTARS
— one of the
(Edinburgh) Festival's
runaway successes."
The Guardian, London

"A blockbuster
danced with tremendous
pace, stamina and bravado."
The Times, London

"Brilliance,
uncertainty,
tenderness,
violence, humour,
irony, grief and joy
are all there in
WILDSTARS"

The Advertiser, Adelaide

SHINES ON SYDNEY

THEATRE ROYAL SEPTEMBER 4-19

Matinees September 5, 12, 19 at 2 pm

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REPERTORY SEASON

**PROGRAMME ONE
SEPTEMBER 22-24,
8 pm**

Kindling/Fire
Choreographed by
Jonathan Taylor
A powerful and touching
figure in human form about
the sun death. The West Australian

Transfigured Night
Choreographed by
Jonathan Taylor
Transfigured Night is not
merely Taylor's day work
it is a masterpiece. The Age

Black Angels
Choreographed by
Christopher Eade
"Translating hell, sadness and
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powerful. The Age

Labyrinth
Choreographed by
Christopher Eade
"a technically complicated
dazzling and rapidly
evolving work. The Advertiser, Adelaide

**PROGRAMME TWO
SEPTEMBER 25, 8 pm
SEPTEMBER 26,
8 pm, 2 pm**

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Choreographed by
Jonathan Taylor
"A powerful and rapidly
evolving work about
violence in human
relationships. The Age

Passions
Choreographed by
Jonathan Taylor
"a powerful piece which
captures the complexity of
the human condition. The Advertiser, Adelaide

Wires By Spring
Choreographed by
Jonathan Taylor
"An exploration of
relationships with extraordinary
style and technical mastery. Set
and light work simple and
effective, providing an
excellent ground for the
dancers and music. The Age, Perth

Labyrinth
Choreographed by
Christopher Eade
"an exploration of an
appealing and 4.0 T's
dances a performed
impassably. The Advertiser, Sydney

**THEATRE ROYAL,
SYDNEY.**



A national style, part two — The Men

by Bill Sheehridge

For one reason or another, the latter half of the 20th Century in ballet has become known as the age of renaissance for the male dancer.

Nureyev's defection in 1962 — coming, as it did, at a time of greater international interest in ballet as a form, heralded a resurgence in the importance and possibilities inherent in the male dancer's body. That is not to say that male dancers were discouraged before then, as there were many good men around like Michael Somes, John Gilpin and Arnie Dolan. It's just that Nureyev's highly publicised arrival requested much of the talent then performing.

For a long time, however, due to the style of the late 19th century Paris Opera ballet, the male dancer went into an eclipse. The Romantic ideal couldn't tolerate the positive and powerful physiognomy of the man with the ethical and otherworldly concepts that it held dear.

Due to the influence of that school in Russia, principally the Imperial Maryinsky ballet under the rule of Petipa, the male always there was given little pride of place. Petipa, as Balanchine has said, had an eye for women and knew how to present them to greatest effect. In *Swan Lake*, *La Bayadere* and *Sleeping Beauty* the role of Woman is manifestly of the greatest importance. The structure of those works is bound up with that (which is why those productions of *Swan Lake* that try to make Prince Siegfried the most important character always end up destroying themselves).

Because of the greatness of those works, limiting the scope of male emphasis, and because of prejudice, male dancing was looked on as dubious. It was for a long time quite all right for men to be supple, athletic, or dramatic in the way their gestures are supple, athletic and dramatic — but it was bad form to take that athleticism one step further by adding an 'erotic' perspective. It had to do with sexual stereotypes.

Now all that is changed. Audiences today queue to see Nureyev or Baryshnikov for the same reasons they queue to see Markova, Farrell or Merle Park, sexual balance has been restored.

One of the great graces of the Australian Ballet has always been the strength and vigour of its male dancers. Australian audiences have responded to that virile force because it claims its authenticity and dramatic sweep.

The men in the AB are dramatic, they are powerful, but I don't think Australia will ever create a male dancer of such technical perfection or supple (yet strong) as, say, Erik Bruhn, because that naturalness of elegance of male dancing which is a part of Bruhn's Royal Danish Ballet heritage is not here in Australia.

Kelvin Coo is probably the only AB man with that kind of silky technical ease, but whether it is because of the parts he has had over the years or because of personal problems, he always seems at one remove from what he's doing. It is a defence coming not out of a desire to distance his material, but more from a feeling of isolation from his company.

Coo has never, in my experience, been successful in a dramatic part. After the initial exposition his characterisation just fades away like shyering. It will come back into focus occasionally, when he has the stage to himself, but it is a focus as a dancer dancing, not the character dancing. He is always better in a light lyrical role or a comedy part (which is why he was so good last year as D'Astrogian in *The Three Musketeers*) because here he is not expected to build up a part out of anything else but his technique, a comedy skill. He is a clear, charming, son of dance vocabulary, but it is composed mainly of parts.

When John Mehan was dancing with the AB, he always managed to impress an audience with a dramatic flair, romantic impetus and poignant vigour in his characterisations, but there were times he just went over the top and anything that needed real dance expression came over by fits and starts. His operatic talent which, by the way, did not develop or change when he moved to American Ballet Theatre.

Ross Saretton, now with New York's Jeffrey Ballet, was one of the few AB male dancers who came near to encapsulating everything that the part of Siegfried in *Swan Lake* needed. He had that deep, slightly melancholy romantic ardour which helped him so much in *Romeo and Juliet* and a wide, expansive outline in adagio dancing. When he took over the lead part in Louis Falck's *Carrousel* — however, dancing in a completely alien style, he just dissolved into a mass of jiggling, rubbery non-sequences. Saretton's

talent is a small-bean talent, but when he was given a part that suited him, he was always believable and always exact.

Of the current crop of male principals with the AB, there is little for one to range over, it's as if they are being typecast into a role or a style that people found suitable at an early stage and haven't really developed.

Dale Baker, for example, is great in trashy MOM ballets like Bejart's *Symphonie*, because he always ponces on his material. The characterisation is memorable because it is big and emphatic, but it never grows because it is never subtle and the same goes for the dancing. That was shown beyond a doubt a couple of seasons ago in the pas de deux from Bourmeister's *Winter Festival* at Grosvenor. While his wife, Ann Jenner, knew how to achieve that soft, phant Bourmeister spring (especially in the foot and arm work), Baker was it to shreds by dancing it like a Bejartian concert piece. The feet were sloppy, the arms thrown all over the place and the jumps had that rigidity which we get with the Bejartian propulsive specialities.

David Burch can jump — we've reminded of that constantly. He is also quick, but as an actor on a part he looks like he's engaged in pinstrip. We can see the motions but they never come over with impact. It is not that he doesn't have the ability to bring in something more than signs and mantras, he performs them in *Affrescoes of a Flamingo* owed that he can go further. I fear it is because he's never had a role that demands expression through dance terms, a dramatic role. It would be a great step forward for this dancer if we Gary Norcross took March in *Romeo and Juliet* out of a Flamingo. Photo: Steven Glick.



DANCE



Rebecca Bates, Dance in Motion

**A C T
BRYAN LAWRENCE SCHOOL OF
BALLET**

Centanne Theatre Centre, Playhouse
(0490466) Giselle, the full-length
popular costume ballet

Sept 1-5

NSW

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE

Theatre Royal (231 5111) *Wildsters*, a
spectacular combination of dance and
special effects by Jonathan Taylor
and Nigel Triffin Sept 4-10; *Fibber-
gibbet*, *Transfigured Night*, *Black
Angels*, *Labyrinth* Sept 22-24; *Broken
Head*, *Paradigm*, *Winter By Spring*,
Labyrinth

Sept 25-28

THE DANCERS COMPANY

Clive Theatre, Newcastle (04921677)

Mixed bill by graduate student arms of
Australian Ballet

Potential for liquid movement in
Ashion's Monotones, light-hearted
nostalgia in Robert Ray's *Poems*, but
no way out of outdated melodrama in
Carmen by Roland Petit

Sept 15-16

Copacabana, Sept 15-19

**THE SYDNEY CORPOREAL MIME
THEATRE**

Seymour Centre Downstairs

(5520555) mixed program covering
an epic theme, Brazilian style, the
swing of Gershwin and comedy
inspired by *Commedia de l'arte* Sept
30-Oct 17

**KINETIC ENERGY DANCE
COMPANY**

Lismore City Hall (066213556)
Gallery Dances

"A lot of posturing and rolling"
according to last month's TA review of
these vignettes of art gallery visitors
ReCollections, *revivals* and *new works*
Sept 30

OLD

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY

SGSO Theatre (321 3821) *Artists*, a
new full-length classical style work by
the company's artistic director Harold
Collins to Les Biches by Iphigene, with
arrangements by Les Percussions de
Shenbourg Sept 10-18

**KINETIC ENERGY DANCE
COMPANY**

Cement Box Theatre (371 5734)

Gallery Dances

See NSW entry

Sept 24-25

SA

THE DANCERS COMPANY

Festival Theatre (515121) Mixed bill
as in Newcastle, see above
Sept 5-12

TAS

THE DANCERS COMPANY

Princess Theatre, Launceston
(951359) *Giselle* Sept 2-5

VIC

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Palais Theatre (534 0651) *Onigumo* by
John Cranko reproduced by Anne
Woolliams

One of the AB's most popular full-
length ballets, from the poem by
Pushkin

DANCE COMPANY

National Theatre (5340221)

Collection of short ballets choreo-
graphed by Wayne Bacon, Edward
Brodsky, Ron Bekker and John Liane
Sept 9-12

WA

WA BALLET COMPANY

His Majesty's Theatre (321 8255)
Short ballets by Balanchine, Coenly,
Welsh and Scoggin are mixed and
matched with *Peter and the Wolf*.
To suit adults and children in matinees,
early evening and normal 8pm
performances
To Sept 5

DANCE

feature

It may be that the industry is, after all, going to take the hit between its teeth and make films about the way Australians live here and now.

I say after all, because it seemed for a while that our cinema was going to be ignored in favour of our past, what with *Pinkie*, *The Gearing of Windows*, *The Picture Show Man*, *The Irishman*, *Breaker Morant*, *Mr Brilliant Career* and so on. *Harlequin*, *Fairfax* and *Things* were not going to be anything but a bit of fun. There was some reason to suppose that the people who went to see Australian films — a limited audience — liked costumes and fantasy better than a story of people they might meet every day at the supermarket or corner shop.

But popular taste is storytelling, in film as anywhere else, is prone to be unpredictable. The question might well arise, how far back is back? How close do we feel to writers such as Henry Handel Richardson and Miles Franklin, Kylie Tennant and Martin Boyd whose novels formed the basis for cinema and television films made here?

Australia did not invent the let's-look-back fashion. The Americans and the English (in television) have been and are still doing it.

In Australia the times really do seem to be a-changing, despite the fact that the biggest film up for prizes at the Australian Film Institute Awards on September 16 in Gallopole, a celebration of our greatest piece of history and/or mythology.

The Awards, which will be presented at the Regent Theatre in Sydney have come to represent the industry's seal of good housekeeping, though some of those involved may be reluctant to accept it as such. That the relevant to accept it as such. That the Awards survive — that is the 26th annual presentation — is an indication of the respect in which they are held, and the belief that they serve a purpose in making official and public the industry's standards of excellence. In a way, they define the industry's opinion of itself.

The structure of the Awards, established by the Australian Film Institute in 1968, is based on the rule that AFI members are required to vote on all films before voting to that on informed electorate to judge them can be formed. All members are able to

vote for the best film, but other categories are restricted. For instance, producers and directors vote for best direction, sound, original score, art direction, costume design, editing and cinematography; writers for best screen play; editors for best editing, score and sound.

The Awards got a considerable boost in 1980 when the producers, the first in a four year contract between the AFI and the Australian Broadcasting Commission, secured a very big television audience many of whom might never before have had any contact with Australian film. The executive producer was Ric Sark and Graham Kennedy, with a script written for him by that warty pair, Gary Keilly and Tony Sattler, completed the show.

The short list of feature films are:



Woodstock, from CBF Films; producers Pam Oliver and Errol Sullivan; director Greg Whitburn; cinematographer Dean Serrier; screenplay Ken Quennell; music by Cameron Allen, with Judy Davis, Wendy Hughes, John Hargreaves, Dennis Miller, Max Collin; distribution by Hoyts.



Grandel, Grandel, Grandel from Australia; producers Philip Adams and Alexander Saxe; director, Adams and Alexander Saxe; screenplay and art direction also Philip Adams; music Bronck Winston; and voices from, among others, Urmston, Michael Dignam, Julie McKenna.

THE GLITTERING PRIZES

The AFI Awards

by Elizabeth Widdows



The Survivor from PG Film Productions, producer Anthony Gavanagh, director John Seale, screenplay by David Ambrose, music Brian May, with Robert Powell, Peter Sarsgaard, Joseph Cotten, Angela Punch McGarr, Jerry Agutter



Wrong Side of the Road from Iona Productions, producers Ned Leader and Graham Isaac, director Ned Leader, cinematographer Louis Irving, screenplay by Ned Leader and Isaac, music from Us Mob and No Fixed Address, with Luke Stevens, Bart Wouloughy



Centreground from Australian Film Productions, producer Wayne Groom, director Tony Paterson, cinematographer Geoffrey Sargent, screenplay Michael Ralph and Robert Fogden, music John Sharp, with Peter Tischer and Kyle Foster



Sweet Dreamers from TC Productions, producer Lally Tucker, director Tony Cowan, cinematographer Bryan Probyn, screenplay Cowan and Tucker, with Richard Moor and Sita Sengh



Winter of Our Dreams from Vega Films, producer Richard Munro, director John Dugan, cinematographer Tom Cowan, screenplay John Dugan, music Sharon Cleland, and Graham Lowden



Gallop from Associated R & R Films, producers Robert Stimpwood and Patricia Lovell, director Peter West, cinematographer Russell Boyd, screenplay by David Williamson from a story by Peter West, with Mel Gibson, Mark Lee



Redgum from Quest, producer and director Richard Franklin, cinematographer Vincent Munoz, screenplay Everett De Roche, music Brian May, with Stacy Kusch, Jeanne Lee Corbin



Fatty Finn from Children's Film Corporation, producer John Sexton, director Maurice Murphy, cinematographer John Seale, screenplay Rob Elms and Chris McGill, music Graham Bond, Rory O'Donnell, with Ben Guesbould, Bart Newton, Peter Carroll, Nom Harefield

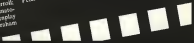


The Club from South Australia Film Corporation, producer Matt Carroll, director Bruce Beresford, cinematographer Don McAlpin, screenplay David Williamson, with Graham Jack Thompson

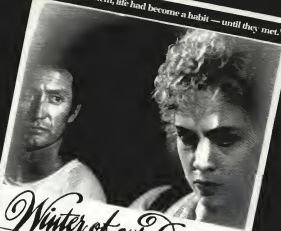
Well, it will all be sorted out on the big night. By that time all films will have had to have a public screening. While The Club has been around for many months, and seems not to have got the audience one might expect for the writing, the direction and the actors, some other films are almost unknown quantities. These include *Wrong Side of the Road*, *People in the Industry* seem to think that the strongest contender, for one reason or another, will be *Winter of Our Dreams*, *Gallop*, *The Club*, *Fatty Finn*, *Wrong Side of the Road*.

I have to assume that *Gallop* will take out the big one, Best Film, on the night of September 16, and Peter Weir may well be elected Best Director. I can see why in both cases, and I am sure that *Gallop* cannot fail to be immensely popular.

My personal choice for best film, best director and best actress is *Winter of Our Dreams*. In its story, direction, cinematography and performance, and in its understated way, it has a lot to say about Australian life in the cities — where, potential and cinematographers keep telling us, most of us live, by choice.



"For both of them, life had become a habit — until they met."



Winter of our Dreams

AN ACCLAIMED AWARD-WINNING TEAM
COMBINE THEIR TALENTS FOR A
SUPERB NEW MOTION PICTURE



Vega Film Productions presents
JUDY DAVIS AND BRYAN BROWN

WINTER OF OUR DREAMS
with Cathy Downes and Baz Luhrmann

Cinematography: Tom Cowan Music composed by Sharon Calcraft Editor: Henry Dangar
Written and Directed by John Duigan Produced by Richard Mason

Made in association with the Australian Film Commission, Vega Productions, Spectrum Films and Coda Film Distribution



Distributed by
Coda Film Distributors Pty Ltd



plus

**"THE GIRL WHO
MET SIMONE
DE BEAUVOIR
IN PARIS"**

*A comedy based on French playwrights
and known about stars.*

Directed by Richard Hillier



review

Gallipoli — the big one

by Elizabeth Ridout

There is no question that *Gallipoli* is as big one, with a lot hanging on it. Should Britain, Europe and America also promote the film and support it? A & P film, however a good part of the action, so with many hopes are depending, from the local industry.

The audience with the question mark over it is the US. But then the American love letters for instance, *The Deer Hunter* — and they may well love *Archy and Meekie* in the splendour of their youth. Rights for the US.

Gallipoli is several different things. A Boys' Own Paper adventure story, a graphic, detailed evocation of the legend we have all been brought up with, even if we choose to laugh at it, deprecate it or and someone's shortcomings on which the deeper discomfusions to live before they die. It is heroic and romantic, the young men of the story have had no time to develop full lives, the kind that brought Bencher, Marston and Handford to their down appointment with a living legend.

The script is not taken from any particular source. Certain things are known about *Gallipoli*, they can be looked up in CEH's official history. No incident in the life story of Australia can be written about, by Australian film, a screenplay by David Williamson from a story by Peter Weir, in two levels, one of comradeship and the other of a military operation, a piece of a war.

It was made at great cost (\$2.2 million) in various locations. Port Lincoln, SA; South Gidjilba, Lake Turgenev; Quare, Cairns, Cairns. The cost list runs to 61 and the crew to 20 plus two Egyptian Ruah. David was director of photography and there were two special effects men, Chris Murphy and Stuart Fyfe. To the scripter eye everything in the film looks authentic, but there is no much going on a campaign bull will down an error in the desert is wrong as truth. Yes, the desert is there, showing its way among the sand dunes, but it does not actually get a mention.

The story starts dramatically with Archy being refused for the spirit by his Uncle Jack. He is to "run like a leopard", and so he does, and takes on the proven version of the *Samuel Galt*. In so doing he has been paid off. In the tradition of boys' own, as early railway ganger who has just completed they become friends and set nearly their lives. A benevolent welcome from, with the father's daughter in uniform and cash. That's it, by the way.

for the female interest.

The two young men stick together and end up on the same point, living and dying the *Gallipoli* legend. In between there is a reason for Frank with his gangster, and a run up the pyramids, as well as a truly remarkable evocation of day to day, hour to hour, life on the campaign.

The score on the campaign, the band has taken up a large part of the second half of the film and while acknowledging its extreme regency and obviousness I am not sure that it does not distract from the theme of grand tragedy. There are so many deaths to demand attention that the fact of Archy and Frank occasionally slips out of focus.

Gallipoli is a director's film. Peter Weir has said that it has been in his mind for years, and I can believe it. He never has gone in his mind, through *The Cars*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, to the highly successful *Breaker Morant* and to the more *Love* *Shower* which made for television, *The* *Samson* for Best Writer, and Best TV Play.

He took a chance with Mark Lee for the role of Archy and it came off, and he took another chance on Mel Gibson for Frank, with the result that Gibson escapes from *Gallipoli* as a star, far removed from the pugilist Tim of Tim, Archy and Frank are Weir's constant, shakable chips, broken by accident, victims of politicians and generals rather than of the enemy.

Other performers who do well in small parts are Neil Kerr in Black Jack, Harold Atherton in the braggart Lie McCann, the stoic man, Robert Grubb, Tim McKenzie in Barney and Nancy who are under more than stereotypes, and Hunter, suitable as Major Harston.

There is something missing in *Gallipoli* in my, by the implication of irreversible death that affects all we know about us ever that happened more than sixty years ago but not less in the imagination.

Neil Graham in *Frank*

Mark Lee in *Archy*





The Four Seasons: Nightly entertaining look at three American couples who value friendship and fun above all, and what happens when one couple comes unglue. Carol Burnett, Jack Winstone, Sandy Dennis and Alan Alda, who wrote the story, do their best. **The Trials of Alger Hiss:** One of the big successes of the 1961 Film Festival, a thrilling detective story put together in the form of a documentary by a US lawyer.

Scopcese by the man who made Cousin Cousine, an irreverent look at life after marriage with French drinking and Jean Cocteau. The smug young marrieds (including their native sisters) are something to see. **Claret Stopped at Ebb:** Gian Maria Volonté, Ingrid Pappert, Alan Cumy in a somewhat old-fashioned, very moving story directed by Francesco Rosi from the autobiographical novel of the same name by Carlo Levi. For those who liked *Padre Padrone* and *The Trail of Wooden Clogs*.

The Godfather, Charles of Artois may be the fun that gets Britain back in business. In unlikely form is athletics, based on the true story of two British runners who in 1934 became the two fastest men in the world.

Thin, a stomach-churning, yet the independent jewel, tied up against the odds — can he make it on his own? James Caan, Tuesday Weld (always a pleasure) and Willie Nelson (plaid) headline. Harpist and love on the Wyoming prairie, with Popcorn on a rancher of the turn of the century, taken from the true life memoirs of Edwina Stewart, Letters of a Woman Homeowner.

Wise Blood: John Huston's behind-the-scenes translation to film of Flannery O'Connor's novel of the south. As an actor we never heard of, Brad Pitt is perfectly convincing as the God-baiting, blaspheming, and finally God-betraying Thomas. This film will be hard to put down.

The *Stunt Man* is a marvellous piece of show-off by Peter Dinklage and others. In a story you will be hard put to follow, what with a boy who has Catherine

The Last Metronome Catherine Deneuve and Gerard Depardieu semi-underground in Gaumont-occupied Paris, forming a theatre and a love affair, directed by François Truffaut, whose *The Man Who Loved Women* is catching.

Kagemusha, by the Japanese master filmmaker, in Japanese with English subtitles. The story of a loquacious dupe of two 16th century imperial brothers, and how not to put your trust in others. Fast moving, Kurosawa's stunning deployment of what seems like thousands of actors, colour, sweep, violent death, even some incest.

Staten, by the German woman director Margarethe von Trotta, is a poignant but never gloomy or maudlin story of two sisters and a third girl living in the shadow of big business and ambition.

Advised States: An unlikely collaboration between Paddy Chayefsky (the playwright and Ken Russell's *The Turn of Mind*) and the *Amos Love* director. It has some very scary bits and some unintentionally funny bits, a new star from the stage, William Hurt.

OPERA info

Contributing Editor Justin Macdonnell

LASCALA EXHIBITION

Opera lovers in Sydney and Melbourne will have a splendid opportunity to see behind-the-scenes workings of the magnificent La Scala Opera House in a multi-media exhibition being presented in September and October in those cities by the '81 Italian Arts Festival.

This audio-visual display will take the viewer from the package presentation of scenery and costumes through the various stages of rehearsal and preparation to the finished product on stage in one of the world's leading opera houses.

The Exhibition will be presented at Exhibition Hall, Sydney Opera House from September 28-October 3 and QTC House, Martin Place from October 3-10, and in Melbourne at Collins Place from October 12-23.

the all-encompassing banner of Immortal Operetta, PolyGram has released a series of 12 records and cassettes consisting of highlights from 19 of the world's favourite operettas. Long a neglected section of the classic repertoire, the collection includes the obvious "gems" such as *Die Fledermaus*, *The Merry Widow* and *White Noise* (Jays). But what this series does that others in the past have failed to do is include lesser known repertoire, like *Bohème*, *The Dabney*, *The Circus Princess*, *Carlini de The Air* and *A Night in Venice* — just a few titles from the collection. The artists, stars of German radio, television and operetta, include Ingeborg Hallstein, Hans Hoppe, Rita Harnon and Willy Hofmann. The entire series is conducted by Franz Mrazek.

OPERA CONFERENCE SUPPORTS DIX

At its recent meeting in Melbourne, the Opera Conference considered many of the recommendations of the Dix's Enquiry into the operations and future of the ABC, particularly as they touched on orchestral resources and the loosening up of music management generally in this country.

Particularly urged on for comment and support was a key recommendation of the Enquiry that:

"In consultation with the Australia Council a mechanism or mechanisms be established, designed to ensure full consultation and co-operation with Government and non-Government bodies concerned with all areas of arts activity at state and regional levels, with the aim of improving and extending its coverage of the arts and extending exposure of creative work to the widest possible audience."

AUSTRALIAN OPERA'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Australian Opera appears to be adopting an extremely low profile on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary. Apart from a rapid cake-cutting demonstration at the Sydney Opera House and a rather shakily put together retrospective exhibition in a Sydney bank chamber, little has been done specifically to acknowledge what is after all a major milestone, not only for opera in Australia but also the arts as a whole. Despite the changes in management over the years, (which have been somewhat less frequent and erratic than is popularly supposed) this anniversary represents a significant period of continuity of production and performance involving many hundreds of artists of all descriptions over the years, which should not be so lightly overlooked.

AO HONOURS NEIL WARREN-SMITH

In honour of the recently deceased baritone, Neil Warren-Smith, The Australian Opera has dedicated the opening performances in Sydney (October 8) and Melbourne (November 13) of their new production of *The Bartered Bride*, in his memory.

This is an especially fitting tribute as not only was Mr Warren-Smith himself a distinguished Koral in the opera, but also in 1981 celebrated 21 years of association with The Australian Opera and its predecessor, the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company.

TICKET BOOM IN SA

While the other live performing arts in Adelaide may be undergoing some doldrums at the box office, ticket sales for the State Opera have reached an all-time high.

Their June production of *Le Bohème* achieved near capacity and the August production of *Carmin* was sold out a fortnight before opening night.

The forthcoming production of *The Barber of Seville* later this month looks like achieving a similar record. It seems clear that the management's decision to programme a season of post-boxers in 1981 has paid handsome dividends and the word is that it's a policy that will be abandoned only with great reluctance in future years.

OPERETTA FOR THE RECORD

PolyGram Classics, distributors of Philips, Deutsche Grammophon and Decca repertoires, has recently moved into the semi-classical world of operetta. Under



Neil Warren-Smith

OPERA feature

MUSIC THEATRE

by Justin Maddenell

Listening recently to two ladies on the stage belt out "What Ever Happened To Class?" followed only nights later by the other singing ladies negotiating the sinuous complexities of opera seria, I thought, more to the point: Whatever happened to classifications?, and in particular Whatever happened to the "music theatre" that we used to talk so much about?

On the face of it, Bob Fosse, Fred Ebb and John Kander's *Chicago* and Handel's *Alcina* would appear to have little in common. By an odd coincidence only, they happen both to have played recently at more or less the same time in the Sydney Opera House, thereby giving rise to a series of comparisons which might otherwise never have been apparent.

Each piece emerges from social and historical milieu and reflects theatrical concerns that could hardly be less alike. Yet for all that, they and the productions they were given had some extraordinary things in common.

Both are works that are almost entirely bereft of what Broadway would call a "hook". Both rely for their success on a series of musical/vocal "turns", in which one or more singers simply stand and deliver. In each case, these "turns" are variously expressed by and interlarded with choreography, so each the chorus becomes almost moveable scenic effects or atmospheric devices framing the vocalists. Moreover, both the productions in Sydney are graced in their leading roles by three outstanding Australian women performers. In *Alcina* Joan Carden, Margreta Elkins and Heather Begg; and, in *Chicago* Nancye Hayes, Geraldine Turner and Judy Connell.

Leave aside that the training and theatrical background of these two sets of women is at the opposing extremes of the musical theatre. All

are vocalists in which finally the only worthwhile criterion to be applied in assessing the success of these shows is the fact that these performers are equal to the vocal theatrical demands made on them, and transform the simple clay of the work into events which demand attention far beyond what many would see as their intrinsic worth.

Returning to the pieces themselves, both works require the suspension of disbelief to an almost unparalleled degree in either genre. Both are set in imaginary, rarified societies (one of 17th century illusory court magic, the other in 1930's Hollywood gangsterland fantasy).

Both are pieces which on less skilled hands — musically, choreographically and in overall production values — could, for the almost total absence of intellectual content, be either dead bores or terrier dangerously on the verge of the simply ludicrous. We were fortunate that in Richard Wherren and Sir Robert Helpmann these skills rarely, if ever, slipped.

Curiously, despite the three centuries that separate their composition, both productions, from a design point of view, superbly illustrate the use of what might be called "a touch with intention". Again, taken again by again, the view that this or that is vulgar, that overdone or all of it unnecessary might all be justified readily, but the fact is, its usage works and works triumphantly.

What does it all mean? Is this the great "music theatre", maybe, they've all been talking about?

Two things strike me. Firstly, that a preoccupation with naturalistic detail, confused more often than not with a concern for realism, has distorted perception of how secondarily effective sheer vocal skill can be in a fantastical context. Secondly, what is music theatre anyway?

Music theatre — those nouns unhappily in apposition — is at times too loosely scattered around today that confusion and often resultant disenchantment is rife. The now rapidly receding inquiry of the Australia Council entitled *What Opera and Music Theatre*, though it failed in the event diamally, if not perhaps sur-



pitifully, to come to grips with its implications beyond mapping out a plan for an investment fund for Renaissance.

In the sixties, when the term first took off in English in a big way, it was understood in more refined music circles to refer to quasi-musico-dramatic productions in which the elements of voice, instruments and movement made an active and hopefully equal contribution to forwarding the action of a given piece.

Alexander Goehr in introducing his *Nabokov's Vineyard* took as the paradigm of this form the elegant simplicity of Monteverdi's chamber piece *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* based on a text by Tasso. Goehr linked the intention set out by the Italian composer regarding the *Stille Representative* to "modern" concerns of an integrated musical-dramatic format coaxing the text and frequently abandoning altogether a strictly sung line in favour of a version of declamatory recitative or vaguely accompanied speech. The ideas were not new. As far back as the late twenties Lotte Lenya was talking of Weill's *Kleine Mahagonny* and Milhaud's *Parure Marselot* at the Baden Baden Festival, where they were premiered, as "the purest form of music theatre" for having exhibited some of the very traits taken up thirty years later.

Many critics at this time saw an arc of interest and form connecting the Renaissance masters of this genre with composition in the twentieth century — from Monteverdi to *The Soldier's Tale* as it were.

The one factor which united all these views was that whatever else music theatre might be it decisively did not encompass the largely nineteenth century tradition of opera — debated in their view by the use of wayward theatricalism, poverty of acting, a passive use of the orchestra and — horror of horrors! — inferior, often grand guignol, texts. And if opera was out, how much further beyond the pale was the American musical? True, Bernstein and Sondheim were allowed to have talent, but how much happier they would be composing for stage and pencil drawings.

To be fair the movement on both sides resulted in a much-needed re-examination of many of the premises on which the inherited forms rested. Critically, however, it left practically anything in music drama that did not fit the evolving definition of music theatre out in the cold and branded as elitist and irrelevant.

As with so many movements of the sixties, certainty has receded. Do we ignore *Oedipus* because it was written in an unfashionable century. Or *The Marriage of Figaro* because Mozart was bold enough to use more than five instruments? Would it not be better and healthier to derive the definition from examples rather than include or exclude on the basis of some mysterious musicological blueprint.

In reverting to my starting point, it would be nice to conveniently slot both *Africa* and *Chicago* as music theatre merely on the basis of their centuries of origin and leave it at that. But if we wish to persist with the term it might be happier if we employed it as a means of viewing artistic landmarks rather than as a category in itself.

If these two major Australian companies can continue to exhibit skill at this level and to explore the limits of drama — call it opera, musical or what you will — we can start to approach a view of music theatre which is not the preserve of any one area of the arts or narrowly straightjacketed into one historical movement or specific act of intellectual concern. We may by this means begin to define the middle ground of this elusive phenomenon and arrive at a more comprehensive grasp of the areas in which music, either vocal or instrumental, acting, movement, dance and all the performance arts, meet and can be mutually productive and illuminating.

Maximilian Fabian (Ruggiero) and Joan Carden (Alicia) in the AD's Africa. Photo: Brian J. Goss



OPERA review

A justified revival

by Ken Healy

July brought four operas in three cities, a mainstream presentation with barely a nipple of excitement, the world's favourite operetta, and two rarities, only one of which received the special treatment that justifies revival.

The talking point of the month had to be the Australian Opera's *Borygme-Sutherland* extravaganza, *Les Huguenots* by Meyerbeer. Thankfully, the only extravaganza of the evening turned out to be in the vocal mass and the excessive length of this five-act opera. The very fact that not even a five-night audience at the Sydney Opera House felt moved to applaud John Stoddart's conventional but effective acts made this production a candidate for the category of "justified revival of a rarity". Any singing doubts were dispelled by the quality of the singing, especially that of Sutherland and Marilyn Zschau, and the judiciouslike libretto of the greatly maligned Eugene Scribe.

The fact must be recorded that I have never heard Sutherland sing with more majesty, confidence, power, and bravura than in the second act, which is an extended vocal display for the Queen. Thereafter, the opera belongs totally to Valentin, the young Catholic whom the Queen wishes to marry. Nasci de Nangis, a Huguenot nobleman, Marilyn Zschau made the most of her opportunity, the intensity of her love duet with Anton Austin (Nasci) was not diminished by the fact that he occasionally found the role a fairly too demanding for his lyric tenor. The others who sang up to their own best forms were John Pringle (de Noyers), Anne-Marie McDonald as his valet, Clifford Grant as Nasci's servant Huguenot servant, and Bruce Martin as Valentin's father.

Scribe has succeeded in writing a version of the Paris massacre of St Bartholomew's day in 1572 in which personal conflict and the reasons leading to violence are more important than displays of violence. Only in the later acts does Meyerbeer's music cease rewarding the action with self-indulgent vocal display sung to the accompaniment of pedestrian orchestration. Producer Lutz Marcouss has a way with big productions of massive opera, and kept a sense of due proportion. Michael Stennett's costumes were grand in the manner we have come to expect from the national company, and Richard Borygme showed that he is truly at home conducting this adequate, but never great, music.

The Australian Opera's *Rigoletto*, which opened on the night following the premiere of *Les Huguenots* was a dull affair. The fault did not lie with Verdi is not much wrong either with this production by John Copley in settings by Allan Lees and the costumes of Michael Stennett. It has held the stage with changing casts for some years, and has generally worn well. What lost point it is, then, to say that Donald Shanks and Lesley Stender as Sparafucile and Maddalena were easily the most satisfying performances of the night.

The Australian Opera was unfortunate that its scheduled Duke of Mantua, Luis Lema, failed to arrive. Henri Widies who sang the part, lacks the heroic tone and the dramatic verve required of the man who seduces his sister's daughter and survives an assassination attempt to continue singing "La Gioia e mobile" lustily ever after. Yvonne Kenny's Gilda was casual — a measured attempt by a fine lyric soprano to meet the coloratura demands of the role. In being careful Miss Kenny allowed very little of the polish charm of the part to emerge.

Robert Allan's *Rigoletto*, though powerfully sung, is not one of his better roles, his stage persona is naturally the brooding, malicious villain of later Verdi. Raymond Myers at his best is more suited to portraying the pathos of the little man so whom the tragedy happens. Allan's needs a grand character such as Nabucco if he is to portray a villain rather than a perpetrator. Richard Borygme kept the music coming at a lively pace without ever impeding the drama (largely in the rhythms in this opera, as it is in *Don Giovanni*) which the score and the story demand.

In almost any other month the pleasant surprise with which to lead into a general review would have come from Victoria State Opera's delightful production by Robin Levey of *Der Freischütz*. Largely because we expect the operetta to please the packed stalls (which being very unsure about the prospects of *Les Huguenots*, Strauss has yielded pride of place this month to Meyerbeer, not that Victoria State Opera on this form should yield place to anyone. Richard Dvornik gave us an overture whose melodies and changes of mood could perhaps have been more musically integrated. Thereafter the music was unhelpfully at the service of the production much in the way that a good chef and waiter de-assert the success of high born meals.

Stylish revelling was what this production gave its audience, and so convincing was the sense of style that I gradually overcame my initial distaste for

of Robin Levey's shiny dog-eared dialogue. Designer Anne Fraser devised settings that were light without being austere — maybe too many pointed palms in the first scene, but what a grand prospect of a vaulted ceiling for the ballroom, which, like a giant above the audience to the right of Frank and Frodo, looked like a Victorian railway station. Most effective. The colour and cut of costumes were splendid without a hint of under-extravagance. This company, playing to packed houses, is finding its place in our community. Next year's AG production of the same opera had better look to its heels.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome a thoroughly enjoyable production in which the primary plaudits go to director, designer, and musical director. In fact, the cast looked and moved well, and mostly sang very well indeed, but this was never to be a night of vocal display. As Roudine Beverly Borgen was strained, stony, and shrill, never comfortable. On the other hand, there can rarely have been a more striking Alfred, handsome in both figure and voice, than Jon Weaving. Helena Natchera is not as good as the best Adels, but she sings well, and sounding like a youngster with development to come. Robert Grant moves easily between being the world's most successful princely lord and his role on this occasion a deliberate man-about-town. His Eusebio nicely matched against Frederick Pardlow's Fache, thoroughly suave and professional, his fine baritone a surprise only to those who had not heard it before.

A small sadness at the Princess Theatre grew into a major sorrow within a fortnight when it was learned that Ned Warren-Smith, who had played without notable impact the small part of Froch, the painter, whose the small sadness had died after the final performance of the production. He was a foundation member and pillar of the Australian Opera, and his Baron Ochs may be the finest thing I have ever experienced from a member of the national company. We will soon have cause to regret the lack of video and audio records of his Boris, Philip II, Padre Guardiano, Philip Bonami, Barolo, and Samiro.

Canberra Opera's *Martha* in mid-July made me wish that van Cliburn's slight piece had limited its arrival to Queensland Opera's season a year or more ago. Canberra used Allan Lees's costumes and two-dimensional sets (a very comment on the lack of depth in both story and music there) and also imported the tenor Anthony Barrell, whose pleasant lyric sound had been heard singing Lionel's well-known aria "M'Appena" in the Bri-

home production. For the rest, it was an enjoyable night out for those who want to hear 'The Last Rose of Summer' sung by a lyric soprano (Brian Roddy, as Lady Harriet, aka Martha) disguised in peasant dress. Bryan Dawling was an unlikely Phantom. Helen Cornwell (the Sweeney in this company's *Pygmalion*) immaculately addible in the near-central role of Nancy, and Jon Pope a suitably lopsided Sir Imogene Winklefield.

Director Christopher Bodles and musical director William Hawley did the work the honour of appearing to believe in it. The frequent water canopies were never disguised with business, nor was the score hurried. To make a price like this worth serving, one must expend great resources, as the AO did on the extremely more demanding *Les Huguenots*. Speaking of demands, it seems that most of Canberra Opera's audience was satisfied with this sleepily staid told in rarely unmemorable tunes.

Boheme in WA

by Charles Southwood

I wonder what would have happened on opening night of the WA Opera Company's recent *La Boheme* if the curtains had risen on a near-bare stage. Say the sets and costumes on loan from the Australian Opera had failed to arrive. After all, the works of Wagner not only survived but thrived for a while on nothing-but-whole-light-and-black-curtain treatment and someone must have made the same trick on Puccini. The effect in Perth would almost certainly have been disastrous, and in fairness to cast and audience it ought to be said the disaster would have had a first hand in good sense. For *Boheme*, unlike *Tristan*, depends on the visible presence of a world of flesh, blood, sweat and calls to make its point. Imagine Mimi's falling in Act II, sung not in a busy street but in the silent presence of a faded chorus adrift in an outer darkness of black drapes, yet still clinging to a desperate pretence that they are finishing off their Christmas shopping! What might it all mean?

Naturally in Perth the question didn't arise. Producer Jacob Kaufmann reached Tom Langwood's inspired designs with lighting and movement that brought a rich stage-picture and Puccini's music into a relationship as sensitive as it was intelligent. All in all the WA Opera must be fairly proud of the *Boheme*. Principals, chorus, orchestra and musical director Gerald Krag teamed to give a solid account of Puccini's score, and with the prospect of Kaufmann's involvement in its forthcoming *Magnus* (the company can anticipate further success in this kind of multi-medium exercise).

Kaufmann calculated a classic *Boheme* for Perth. In one sense there would be no point trying to do anything else: given the firmness of Puccini's grasp on proceedings, but whatever the case, Kaufmann devoted his energies to focussing the picture already set up for him by the composer. The result was a succession of minor triumphs of clarity and discretion, obvious on the opening stage of Act II, less obvious in those great lyrical scenes of the score that are both the Cupid's dart and the heart of this seductive drama.

John Mann and Christa Lushmann (Rodolphe and Mimi) have the voices to do justice to Puccini's music. So do Paul Neal and Terry Johnson (Marcello and Musetta), and Ian Westrop (Clifford Ansd) and Barry Proctor were all equipped to dispose of their particular roles with competence.

Yet there was a detour about the performance on opening night that can't be laid at the door of a producer whose aim seems to have been functional understatement. Reinforced is not functional in *Boheme*. Everything in the score points to the centrality of the big lyric moments.

The very blood of the opera flows in them and they demand of the singer an unconditional commitment to preserving ardour, unalloyed emotion. Whether willingly or not, though, nearly every singer found something to draw him or her from a direct confrontation with the bright-eyed god of Latin passion, and this Conspiracy of Avoidance was one of the most fascinating things about the evening.

Admitted by the ethics of would-be poets, painters and philosophers, have few some of their attraction in those hard, cold days, even though the tension between union and catastrophe in Act IV is wonderfully expressive. If anything the last note Bohemians avoided the boyishness on opening night, perhaps to compensate for nerves, perhaps because it's a safe option for generating a semblance of dramatic energy. Others may disagree with me on that point.

However, none could have missed the body language that betrayed a disturbing tenderness in Mann and Lushmann's approach to their roles. Signs of awkwardness in face and limited touch in grip Mann even when he voice spoke plainly for Rodolphe's passion. And an almost unbreakably staccato Lushmann missed much of the vulnerability of a Mimi at first startled, but increasingly hurt by the whole-life marriage: from inexperience to knowledge forced on her by her maturity. On the other hand Terry Johnson suffered no material from uncontrolled body language and holed voice and leant into her characterisation with his delectable grace and flair.

Everyone suffered from the English translation, though. Why must we rhyme at any cost? The banality of the translated text did much to spoil the contour of Puccini's supple lines and I'd be surprised if it didn't play a major part in putting the end of the mark.

I don't think we're cold people, we Australians, but the *Boheme* seems to have surprised a part of ourselves we are reluctant to look at. Maybe we don't need it as an emotion but in that case we'd better think hard about the place of Puccini in our opera-theatre. Otherwise we're at risk of spending time and energy on splendid multi-medium diversions that only lack a heart. And we need all our time and energy for getting to know ourselves.

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Capriccio in WA Opera Company's La Botzema. Photo: Graham Jorgy

OPERA

guide

NSW

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (3 6586)

Opera Theatre BOH. *Jenife* by Jansoff
Now in its eighth year of revival, John Cooley's splendid realisation of the Coetz masterpiece with designs by Michael Steinmetz and Alan Lees is now conducted by Stuart Challender
Sept 2-29
La Buena Figliuola see ACT opera guide
Sept 4, 18

Macbeth (in Italian)

One of The Australian Opera's less happy Verdi productions. John Cooley's heavy-handed direction is matched by Stephanos Lazaridis' cumbersome costumes and sets. The revival is mainly notable for having Charles Mackerras conducting and Rita Hunter's first appearance in Australia in this role as Lady Macbeth
Sept 7-21

The Marriage of Figaro by Mozart (in English)

Now the longest running production in the Australian Opera's repertoire, Cooley's enduringly comic interpretation has more than stood the test of time, as have the designs by Bardon and Steinmetz. Thomas Schaback conducts for the first time
Sept 15-30

SA STATE OPERA COMPANY (31 6161)

Opera Theatre. *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini (in English)
Dennis Vaughan conducts a new production for The State Opera of this sparkling comic opera directed and designed by Tom Lingwood. Features Judith Henley, Orsenna Wall, Roger Howell and James Christensen
Starts Sept 26

TAS THEATRE ROYAL (34 6288)

Final By Jury by Gilbert and Sullivan
Gilbert and Sullivan Company
Sept 18-26

VIC VICTORIAN STATE OPERA (662 2911)

The Princess Theatre. *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti (in English)
A semi-new production for The Victorian State Opera. John Mason directs with new costumes by Peter Cooke in Hugh Coleman's original set. Conductor, Richard Drvill and featuring Deborah Cook, Noel Mangin, John Wood and John Packer
To Sept 2
La Buena Figliuola an Australian Opera production. See ACT opera guide. Sept 23-29

WA HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (321 6266)

Ignorance by Gilbert and Sullivan
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A Waltz Dream
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MUSIC

"Akin to a horror stretch in a car trial."

by Fred Blanks

Music competitions have existed at least since the days of Greek mythology. We know that Apollo numbered among his many perquisites the conductorship of the Muses, and made them the adjudicators in contests of musical skill in which he challenged prominent trials. Not surprisingly, he invariably won, and the consequences for the defeated party were often literally fatal. At the very least they had their instruments destroyed.

Modern music competitions are less traumatic, but even so their effects can be overwhelming in a psychological as well as practical sense. That was graphically illustrated in the 1981 Sydney International Piano Competition in July when the 24-year-old lass who represented Romania walked off the stage in the middle of an early round, burst into tears and refused to continue.

Music competitions have, in fact, become a necessary evil, akin to a horror stretch in a car trial. They are necessary because they create a publicly-rich forum for young practitioners of serious music; express the healthy instinct for doing better than others, establish contacts, encourage mutual listening, lay down standards, promote talent, and exertian a public wanted away from blood sports. They are evil because they equate musicianship with prize-winning, compare incomparables (A in Haydn with B in Schumann), engender a sense of failure in many and success in few, force-lend talent like French peasants forced-lend grain, squeeze individual accomplishment into a common mould, and restrict adventures in expanding repertoires.

We are asked to believe that Arthur Schnitzler and Vladimir Horowitz never entered a competition. Other keyboard giants like Vladimir Ashkenazy owe their fame to winning them. Sometimes they launch a young musician towards fame overnight, as happened to Kathryn Selby recently when she was awarded a "discretionary scholarship" in the van Cliburn Competition at Fort Worth, Texas, where she was one of two Australian

parents among the 40 entrants (Alan Koppenhagen was the other) that their sort of success may be like the flight of Icarus, to survive and prosper in music a young performer needs more than mere ability — he or she needs luck, personality, contacts and stamina.

The latter quality was important in the Sydney competition. The 40 parents (of whom 34 eventually participated) who were selected from 150 applicants in 20 countries were faced with four performance stages. Stages I and II were solo recitals which involved one of three compulsory Australian pieces (the easiest piece, by Peter Sculthorpe, was naturally more popular than more demanding ones by Larry Salky and Nigel Butterley), a contemporary work either from a list of 22 composers or by a composer of the performer's native country published since 1950 (Bartok was most popular), and pieces by Chopin, Liszt, Debussy and composers of the player's own choice. Stage III included three sections — participation in chamber-music with the Sydney String Quartet (for quartets, or with violinist Harry Corby and cellist David Perena for trios, song accompaniments, and a 50-minute late-choice solo recital.

In this stage, performers had been whittled down to 12 semi-finalists and only six of these narrowed into Stage IV, which asked for two concerto performances. One was a Mozart concerto with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, conducted by John Harding; the other a rarer one on reedless concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Myer Friedman. At the conclusion of this final hurdle-jump, the placements were announced, and here they are.

First (\$10,000 plus an international concert tour and a recording contract) was Chia Chen, a Taiwan-born Canadian

currently studying in West Germany. Second Endre Hegedus (Hungary). Third Catherine Vukob (Canada). Fourth Daniel Blumenthal (USA), he also won the special prize for the best chamber-music player, donated by Musica Viva (England). Fifth David Owen Norris (England). Sixth Louis Zou-Li (Israel). Then came Marc Kaelenberger (South Africa), Patrick O'Brien (New Zealand), Martin Rossos (England), Alan Chorn (USA) and in sixth place, Edward Newman (USA) and Tsvi Kauli (France).

The general standard of the competition, which was very efficiently administered and judged by a highly distinguished panel of ten pianists from various countries, was perhaps a little lower than that of the previous one in 1977. One reason would have been the absence of Russian pianists this time. But a more significant difference was the great variation in the general style of the best composers, and that must have introduced a certain subjectivity into the assessment by such judges as Claude Frank, Ekorn Joyce, Abbey Simon, Cecile Quast and other fine artists. For example, what does one value higher — the organic Mozart style of Louis Zou-Li, the accented individuality of David Owen Norris, the superb technique in Liszt and Wagner of Endre Hegedus, the marvellous range of touch, from percussive blows to feathery silk-smooth calligraphy, of Chia Chen? But what is what competitors are all about, and naturally there were a few inexplicable decisions as well, such as the exclusion from the semi-final team of Roberto Huchalek from West Germany and Giovanni Battel of Italy.

Surprises happened. The relative failure of the East European contingent to make much of an impact (with the Hungarian exception) was one. Another was the way

in which roles were apparently being with impunity, both on limas (often expected) and offstage. Yet another was the striking performance for Steinway piano over the Beethoven, Yamaha and Bechstein models also available in the first three stages.

It was an exhilarating contest, from the aspect of importance and above all of this blend of musicianship and showmanship that mark the performer who wants to capture a regular international public.

Agatha would have had his hands full. Meanwhile, in another part of the musical forest around Sydney.

There were notable visitors from Perth when the Averyn Quartet made its Sydney debut for Musica Viva at its Heritage Series in the Art Gallery, a proved itself an ensemble of intense musical commitment, just occasionally willing to make a small sacrifice of technical on the altar of quality. Not so be outside the current vintage of the Sydney String Quartet, with William Hennessy as leader, added viola player John Curre from Brisbane for some quartets. Dutch cellist Adriaan Bollen for others, this group sometimes resembles four characters in search of an identity following its unfortunate personnel instability.

Very disappointing was the Vienna Schubert Duo in a repeat of musical transgression that gave us what may have been the first Sydney performance of Schubert's "Die Schöne Müllerin" song cycle by a woman. Two Australian artists impressed, though in one case — that of cellist Susan Blake, a warm-toned and even voluptuous cellist — not many listeners came along for the impression. In the other case, pianist Gwyneth Pryor had a tape ABC subscription concert audience for Beethoven and Griegson concertos during programs notable for a fine making, with Louis Fricman conducting the Sydney Symphony Orchestra of the Shostakovich Symphony No. 10 in which the composer expressed his views of the recently dead Stalin ("a frog pulling himself up to look like an ox").

Finally, like in a recital, we return to the main theme, the Piano Competition — but not to the competitors. The very best pianists came from the adjudicators. Claude Frank played Schubert and Beethoven with the utmost insight, Abbey Simon brought romantic maturity to Chopin and Franck and the Debussy playing of Cecile Quast was definitive.

Very much a month for the keyboard brigade.



The Sydney String Quartet rehearsing with Endre Hegedus

The new individualism

by John McCullum

Farther Love, by Peter Kenna. Currency. (rtp \$3.95)

The Golden Oldies and Susannah's Dreaming, by Dorothy Hewett. Currency. *Marsupials and Politics*, by Barry Oakley. University of Queensland Press. (rtp \$3.95) *Yamashita*, by Roger Pabon. No Names...No Pack Drill, by Bob Herbert. Currency. *Theatre Australia New Writing*. *Upside Down at the Bottom of the World*, by David Allen. Heinemann Educational. (rtp \$4.75)

The 1970s may have begun with a coherent enough group of new Australian plays for critics to sum up easily as a "new school", but if any critics are thinking of doing the same thing now they should be warned. At least as far as published plays are concerned it seems that Australian drama is fragmenting, with subjects and styles of texts spurring out into wider and wider space. This eclecticism which has been growing for the last five years, the effect of making theatre-going a rather hit-or-miss affair for all but those with the most catholic taste. It is good to have a broad range of different types of plays, but devoted, committed audiences may miss the feeling of social and cultural cohesiveness which a narrow, obsessional dramatic "movement" brings.

The new diversity in our drama may well be a good thing. Certainly there are plenty of people who like to score the critical tendency to group plays into "schools" and "movements" and "waves". They feel that is a progressive liberation on the individualist creativity of the various playwrights. What they ignore is the excitement which audiences feel when they can sense that a whole group of writers is working together to explore a common, central issue. Audiences surely love a good new wave.

The range of plays which have come to *Theatre Australia* in the last month illustrates this new individualism in Australian drama. (There!) I've managed to make a movement out of it! In *Farther Love* Peter Kenna personifies how very private moral exploration of the conflicting claims of homosexual appetite and conventional religion Dorothy Hewett, in *The Golden Oldies* and *Susannah's Dreaming* continues to examine what she has called women's "vulnerability to the dream of



romantic love — and the rich feminine vision of the world which a lifetime in prison of and flight from this dream, brings." *Marsupials and Politics*, by Barry Oakley, gives us another gloriously paradoxical vision of individuals attempting to live fulfilling lives in the cultural and political mainstream of contemporary Australian society.

Bob Herbert's *No Names...No Pack Drill* nostalgically evokes Australia during the second World War with old-fashioned theatrical straightforwardness. Roger Pabon's *Yamashita* examines the same war through such different eyes that it seems ludicrous to mention them in the same paragraph. His caricatured vision of the political anomaly of the Pacific War is barely recognizable after Herbert's play.

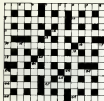
And finally, David Allen's *Upside Down at the Bottom of the World* brings us back to a quiet Australian country town — but to see it through the eyes of an moderately individualistic literary figure — DH Lawrence. Enough diversity and acceptance of individual values in all that to satisfy the most catholic and representative of the "Me" generation of the 70s — even though this is 1981.

Put your poor book reviews, then, trying to respond sensitively etc. in one column, to all this stuff. And put the poor writers, helped by journalists' expediency into one so heterogeneous group. But that is what they have to cope with in the big world of theatre these days.

The best two volumes of this lot are those by Hewett and Oakley. *The Golden Oldies*, one of Hewett's most lyrically beautiful plays, has for a long time only been available in a book made of the women's journal, *Woman*. Instructively relatively simple, for her, a dense and rich verbal score sharpened at key moments with strong visual images, all evoking a great feeling of lives having been lived and now the debris accumulated on the floor and in the air. Passion and violence made gentle and sad by time. To this play is added a radio play, *Susannah's Dreaming*, a strongly atmospheric piece in which all the extraordinary woman's poetic power is concentrated into a few evocative sound effects and a simple story of love and death on a beach.

Marsupials and Politics, in different ways, have all of Barry Oakley's wit, slightly crumbly wit, which constantly threatens to burst out of his contained, almost reserved, formal propriety into complete anarchy. I used the last time I reviewed an Oakley book that they were fun to read (and the back cover of this one throws that back in my face). They are, but the list is that I have never seen one performed, although I have been a fairly regular theatregoer (albeit in Sydney) for some 15 years. I may have been unlucky, but this is still an extraordinary thing considering that he is one of our finest playwrights. What is happening in there, where all these plays are chosen?

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CLUES

Across

1. Flout about no sign of victory in girl (5)
4. Of the French, around fifty in charge

(continued from page 46)

could one day see him in Balanchine's *Prodigal Son*.

Gary Norman and Paul de Maussion to me, are two talents out of the same mould, electrifying and sharp when they want to be, but going on and off like a light all the way through a performance. Norman's dancing and projection in Macmillan's *Les Merveilles* made it one of the best roles he's ever done, but then at another time, left in the lurch with the ineptitudes of the French part in *Guerrille*, he goes through it by rote.

When it comes to the Sydney Dance Company or the Australian Dance Theatre, pecking out the various strengths and capabilities of their male dancers is far more difficult if only for the reason that these two companies are far more a cohesive ensemble than the haphazard Australian Ballet.

To be sure there were things about Ross Philip that made him ideal for *Dargelos* in *Poppo* or Brian in *Daphne* and *Chloe*, something to do with a coiling, brooding quality about his dancing and stage personality, and it is for this reason that Murphy invited him back to guest these parts in the SDC New York season (He will be doing the same in the proposed Sadler's Wells/Hong Kong Festival trip later this year).

- of the Saracen's Head are swags (9)
9. Drink in the dandy's afternoons (5,4)
10. Backward, but not about poetry (5)
11. Part of outside name? (5)
12. Pluck a layer from the most resolute (5)
14. Scaused rise in mining area (6,4)
16. Note we point to and carry on about (4)
19. Way of learning in material he wrote (4)
20. Remotest clan is a load of rubbish (10)
21. Cook surrounds Jack endlessly with sandy fiery (8)
23. Hand over a million, here and there (6)
24. After somehow, but not now (5)
25. Find nothing strange in a coin, it is assured (9)
26. Eccentric scholar of the secret society (9)
28. There's medicine in the bottle I gave to Nick (5)

Down

1. One who associates with an old, a well and a second-class queen (9)
2. Bad habits cause gentlemen, we hear, to leave the forces (8)
3. Situation? In debt again, it's said (8)
4. Many a tree might do this (4)
5. Edge of the arid over shady incomplete Greek study deal (3,5)
6. Sit to model in the shelter for the female (6)

7. Scheme of lessons with dog divinity in obscure American university (9)
8. Utter "transparent" (5)
13. Plumbage and article at right, I state (10)
15. Not in humour, Edward was tickled (8)
17. Point to revolutionary parent and (what — it's to do with the plan (5)
18. Player rating so poorly (8)
19. Rare boots win point (4)
22. Revile born found in early copy of Shakespeare, we hear (5)
24. A good man, Macmillan — small but strict (5)
25. Cold precipitation in the highlands now (4)



The first correct entry drawn on September 25 will receive one year's free subscription to T:A.

The winner of the last crossword was Dr John Upton of Eastwood, NSW.

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Alain Israel will always stay in my mind as the best dancer possible for the lead part in Jonathan Taylor's *Milvans*, simply because of his innocent, Candide-like quality, while Joe Scoglio glaring out at the audience always has that smug, dangerous potential that puts an edge on his performances.

But there are other dancers like Hassan Sheta, Ronald van den Hurgh, Carl Morrow and Robert Camping that I personally have not seen enough of to make any pronouncements on subjective or otherwise.

One thing is for sure, there is enough talent and enough differentiation in personality in Australia's male dancers to make them some of the best in the world. Their abilities and talents are spread over a wide spectrum. Some of them are limited in their range, unlike most of their female counterparts, and the only way to capitalise on that variety is by a very judicious selection of roles. But, with the resurgence of emphasis on male dancing throughout the world, there are going to be more and more male lead parts created, and a lot more men will take their places alongside the ballerinas. The days of facelessness are over.

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